Ontario

Building PATHWAYS to Success

Grades 7–12

The Report of the Program Pathways for Students at Risk Work Group

2003

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Building PATHWAYS to Success

Final Report of the Program Pathways for Students at Risk Work Group

October 2003

From the Chairs of the Expert Panels on Students at Risk and the Program Pathways for Students at Risk Work Group

October, 2003

Fellow Educator:

This handbook is one of the companion documents prepared by our committees for use in English- and French-language schools across the province of Ontario. It represents the Final Report on literacy of the Expert Panel on Students at Risk or the Final Report of the Program Pathways for Students at Risk Work Group. The information and resources it contains are intended to support the work of those in a leadership role for the Students at Risk Initiative.

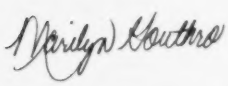
Our Expert Panels and Work Group have worked with the Ministry of Education to provide this material. We acknowledge with deep appreciation the Ministry's support in the preparation and publishing of these documents.

Throughout our committees' discussions, a key theme has been the vital importance of giving **all** students hope for the future. Students will be encouraged to have hope if they believe that they can succeed. For this to be true for all students, our education system needs to provide greater opportunities for improved literacy and numeracy and new program pathways to the world beyond the secondary school.

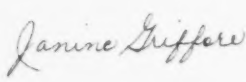
Providing improved educational opportunities, however, is only part of the picture. Attitudes also have to change. In particular, what constitutes students' success needs to be more broadly defined so that it applies to those students who choose to enter the work force immediately after leaving school. As a society we cannot afford to marginalize students simply because their goals may not be recognized as valid and fulfilling. Hence the need for what we have termed a "re-culturing" of schools so that positive and constructive attitudes prevail around options for students who may be considered at risk.

We wish you well as you continue this important work.

Yours in education,



Marilyn Gouthro, Chair
Expert Panel (English)



Janine Griffore, Chair
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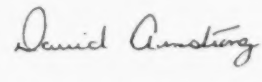

David Armstrong, Chair
Program Pathways Work Group

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Une publication équivalente est disponible en français sous le titre suivant : *Itinéraires favorisant la réussite : Rapport du Groupe de travail sur les itinéraires d'études pour les élèves à risque.*

This publication is available on the Ministry of Education's website at http://www.edu.gov.on.ca.

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About the Program Pathways for Students at Risk Work Group

This report has been prepared by the Program Pathways for Students at Risk Work Group. The Work Group was formed by the Ministry of Education to provide direction to Ontario school boards on the development of program pathways to enable students considered at risk to achieve success and meet their education and career goals. It includes the following education leaders from across the province, chosen for their experience in working with students at risk and for their commitment to improving the educational opportunities for such students:

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Charles Casement, Writer

Introduction to Program Pathways

The Program Pathways for Students at Risk Work Group was established as a direct result of the Final Report of the At-Risk Working Group, "A Successful Pathway for All Students", which was prepared by Barry O'Connor, Director of Education, Limestone District School Board. Among its recommendations, this report called for the formation of "a broad-based Pathways Work Team" that would focus on the pathways followed by students considered at risk as they progress through their school education and take their first steps in beginning a career.

The members of the Program Pathways Work Group have been grounded in the conviction that students have a right to an educational experience that respects and meets their needs and prepares them for the destination of their choice. The Program Pathways Work Group found validation for this belief in *Ontario Secondary Schools, Grades 9 to 12: Program and Diploma Requirements, 1999*:

> *To prepare students effectively for the challenges that await them, Ontario's schools should offer an education program that promotes a high standard of achievement, that provides all students with the learning opportunities and support they need, and that is relevant to society's needs and expectations.*
>
> *OSS, p. 6*

The term "program pathway" refers not just to the combination of courses and supports that make up a student's educational program but also to the underlying purpose that motivates students in their choice of courses. A program pathway is designed to lead a student to a particular destination. This does not mean, however, that the student will always end up at that destination. Motivations can change, and students should be free to make new choices as they develop new interests and abilities. Program pathways must have built-in flexibility so that these choices can be made without disrupting students' progress. The choice of a pathway is not therefore an irreversible decision. Nevertheless, there are many students who, as they enter secondary school, should be able to identify a particular program pathway as being most appropriate to the specific destination they have in mind.

School–Work Transition Program Pathways

The term "school–work transition program pathways" refers to an appropriate and integrated collection of courses and supports that will prepare students for employment immediately on leaving secondary school. This type of program pathway provides students with the opportunity to complete secondary school diploma or certificate requirements, meet the entry-level requirements of a specific industry, develop employability and industry-specific skills, and obtain experience in the workplace.

School–work transition program pathways are developmental in nature, providing awareness-raising activities and opportunities for exploration in Grades 7 to 10, and opportunities for commitment in Grades 11 and 12. Many programs also build in opportunities for students to earn industry-recognized certification.

School–work transition program pathways offer both in-school and work-based experiences. In the intermediate and senior divisions, students earn relevant in-school credits that enable them to develop the range of skills (literacy, numeracy, life, and employability) required for direct entry into the work force. The courses that form a student's program pathway are drawn from all disciplines and may include Applied, Academic, Open, Locally Developed Compulsory and Locally Developed Optional, and Workplace Preparation courses, as well as University or College Preparation courses. A student's program pathway also contains a vigorous experiential learning component, including guest speakers, industry tours, job shadowing, job twinning, short-term work experience, virtual work experience, cooperative education, and school–work transition programs, and may include the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP).

Redefining Student Success

In addressing the needs of students at risk, we need to redefine what we mean when we talk about a student's success. The idea that formal postsecondary education is the most desirable outcome does not reflect the reality of many students' interests, abilities, and choices, and it is unreasonable to measure student success solely in terms of this outcome. Students who obtain their diploma/certificate and find employment must equally be considered a success.

Redefining student success entails a fundamental change in perception among educators, parents, students, and employers. Certain long-held assumptions — that going to university or college is the pathway of preference, and that the best measure of a successful school is the percentage of students taking academic or university/college preparation courses — need to be set aside so that the culture of our schools better reflects the values and aspirations of the entire student population. The emphasis must be on what each student is capable of doing well. The program pathways chosen by students at risk, and the careers open to them, must be recognized as being of equal value to those of other students. Moreover, this recognition must be given in ways that will benefit students in a practical manner. Teachers and parents should certainly tell students that their skills are valued and their

goals worthwhile, but students also need to see unmistakable evidence that this is so. Such evidence will provide a powerful motive for students to re-examine the assumptions they make in deciding which pathways will lead to desirable and rewarding careers.

We may think of this change in outlook as a "**re-culturing**" of our schools. In creating the right conditions in which such re-culturing can occur, we need to rethink what it means to support students who are considered at risk. They need program pathways that are clearly aligned with their strengths and learning styles rather than those in which they struggle to keep up with their peers. Students (and their parents) must see their courses and programs as viable and credible, enabling them to achieve educational goals that fit well with their life goals, not as something they must do because they are failing to make the grade. An education program that "provides all students with the learning opportunities and support they need" (OSS, p. 6) must surely address these concerns.

"Meaningful and sustainable change can only be achieved when people commit not just their minds, their time and their brawn, but more importantly their hearts and their souls."

Lila Read, Presentation to the Program Pathways Work Group, Toronto, 2003

Guiding Principles for Program Pathways

In focusing on the development of appropriate program pathways for students at risk, the Program Pathways Work Group has been guided by the following principles:

1. Ontario schools should offer an education program that promotes a high standard of achievement, that provides all students with the learning opportunities and support they need, and that is relevant to society's needs and expectations.
2. Ontario schools should provide pathways for success for all students at risk.
3. Actively removing systemic barriers to success and challenging prevailing attitudes must be key priorities for all Ontario school boards and education partners.
4. All program pathways will provide students with ongoing opportunities to change and revise goals, directions, and destinations.
5. Building pathways for success is a whole school, whole board responsibility.
6. The development of successful program pathways for students at risk is built upon a foundation of comprehensive, coordinated career education/guidance programs.
7. Effective program pathways will include a broad range of experiential learning opportunities.

8. In order to be successful, program pathways will engage parents.
9. Community partners must be encouraged and challenged to work with educators to build and support program pathways.
10. Leadership at all levels is the key to successful implementation of program pathways.
11. Ensuring effective ongoing communication among all education partners is critical to building and supporting relevant, viable, and up-to-date program pathways.
12. Effective teacher training strategies are fundamental to successful implementation of program pathways.

Building the Foundation

Rationale

This section is intended to provide support and direction to Ontario district school boards as they develop and implement program pathways for students at risk. Key to this direction is the need to bring about a rethinking or re-culturing so that the entire range of postsecondary destinations is equally valued.

Board Leaders for Students at Risk[1] have been given the challenge of determining and designing program pathways that will meet student needs while giving consideration to existing programs and board parameters.

"Building the foundation" includes priority setting for Board Leaders, definitions of students at risk, gap analysis, and professional development. Recommendations for the development of an implementation plan include the setting up of board-level and school-level steering committees and the development of a clearly articulated communication plan.

A flow diagram of the strategic planning and implementation process and a program model chart are shown in Appendices 2.1 and 2.2, at the end of this section. The flow diagram is a suggested critical path for a Board Steering Committee to follow for the first year of strategic planning and early implementation phase. The program model is a suggested tool for school teams to use to overview and discuss school (and family of schools) strengths and areas for improvement. This tool is intended to help schools build a continuum of programming that will enhance opportunities and supports for all students, but particularly for students at risk.

Priorities in Board Leaders' Planning

The following actions are suggested as priorities in Board Leaders' initial planning. This planning will focus on Grades 7 to 12.

- Establish a Board-level Steering Committee.
- Establish a School-level Steering Committee. (The recommended focus and composition of these committees are presented in section 5, Building and Maintaining Connections.)

[1] Board Leaders for Students at Risk will be referred to as "Board Leaders" throughout this report.

- Gather and review data on existing programs, practices, supports, methodologies, and transition plans from elementary to secondary school. (See Appendix 2.3, Data Gathering: A Suggested Approach, at the end of this section.)
- Develop an overview of existing practice within their own board.
- Identify areas of need for students, teachers, and schools, which would include:
  - clarifying and refining profiles of students at risk at all grade levels from 7 to 12
  - carrying out a gap analysis
- Identify and develop supports that build on existing successful practices, which would include:
  - conducting training workshops with elementary and secondary school principals on developing timetables relating to different program pathways
  - conducting training workshops for all principals on preparation and planning for various transitions
- Develop and implement a professional development strategy that draws on the latest research related to instructional strategies and learning styles.
- Develop and implement a communication plan (see section 6).
- Develop a tracking and monitoring system.

The initial priorities centre around the identification of those students considered "at risk" within a board. Once this identification of students at risk has occurred, a gap analysis of the programs required to meet student need can begin. Having solid and accurate information about students at risk within a board will not only assist in appropriate and successful pathway planning and support, but will also help the Board Leader develop effective communication tools that "make the case" for the value of pathway programming.

Students Considered "At Risk"

The students who are considered "at risk" from the perspective of both the At-Risk Working Group and the Program Pathways Work Group are defined as:

- elementary students who are performing at level 1, or below grade expectations;
- secondary students who would have studied at the modified or basic level in the previous curriculum;
- secondary students who are performing significantly below the provincial standard, earning marks in the 50s and low 60s, and who do not have the foundations to be successful in the new curriculum;
- students who are disengaged for a variety of reasons, which tend to be reflected in very poor attendance.

The Program Pathways report is concerned primarily with students who have a school–work transition focus and those for whom a school–work transition program pathway may be the best option. Many of these students are not succeeding in their school program and currently may not be able to complete their secondary school education and graduate with an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD).

The number of students "at risk" by this definition is considerable. Approximately 25% of all Ontario secondary students do not complete their schooling (see Figure 1), and just under 40% fail to acquire 16 credits by the end of Grade 10, a figure that rises to 65% for students taking applied courses.[2] These figures, however, need to be looked at in the context of the courses that students take, as well as their planned destinations on leaving school. A recent survey of Grade 10 students showed that almost 60% were taking academic courses, and the figure rose to over 75% when students taking a combination of academic and applied courses were included. At the same time, over 50% of Grade 10 students were planning to go to university, and 75–80% to either university or college; only about 9% saw the workplace or apprenticeship as their immediate destination (see Figures 2 and 3). But the reality is that just over 50% of secondary school students will go to university or college, and the remainder will enter the work force with or without an OSSD.

As these figures show, for many students there is a **significant mismatch** between their expectations as to what their school education will lead to and what they actually end up doing, a mismatch that is reflected in students' selection of courses. This raises several important questions:

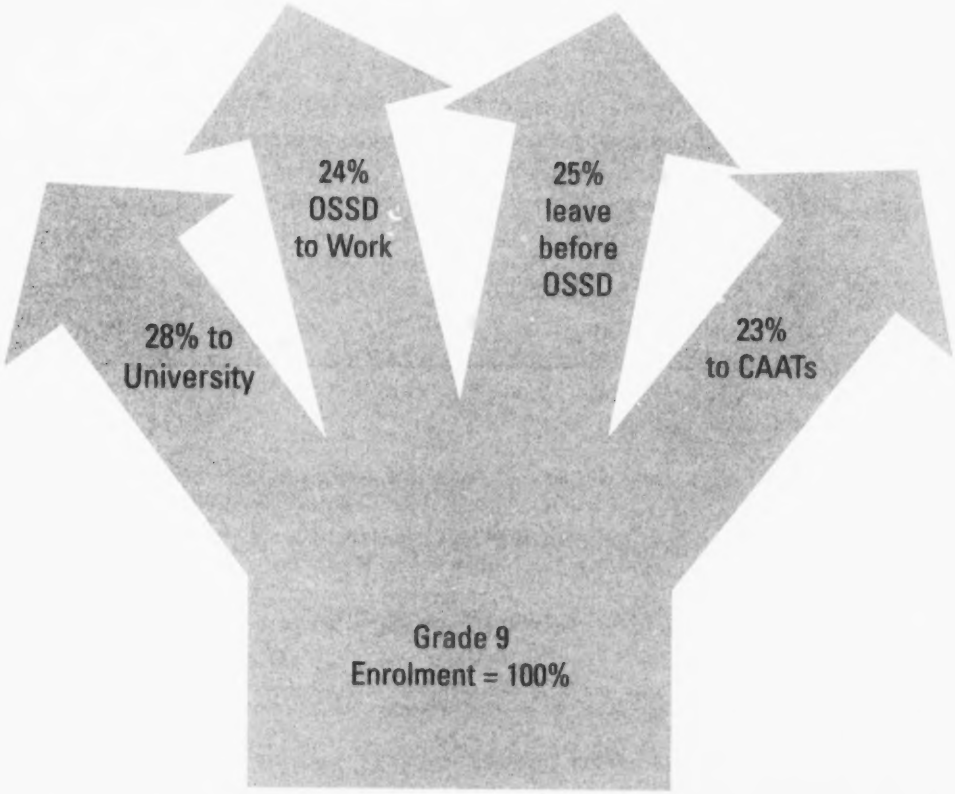
- To what extent are students making inappropriate course choices that place them at risk?
- To what extent are there gaps in support services that place students at risk?
- To what extent is the course menu too narrow to serve student needs?

If students aim for destinations and select courses that are not compatible with the knowledge, skills, and interests they bring to their efforts, they are not positioning themselves for success. Where this occurs, one might conclude that it is **the nature of the education program, and not the level of student ability**, that is creating the risk.

[2] Dr. Alan J.C. King, Principal Investigator, "Double Cohort Study: Phase 2 Report for the Ontario Ministry of Education", Social Program Education Group, Queen's University, October 17, 2002, pp. 18, 91, 93.

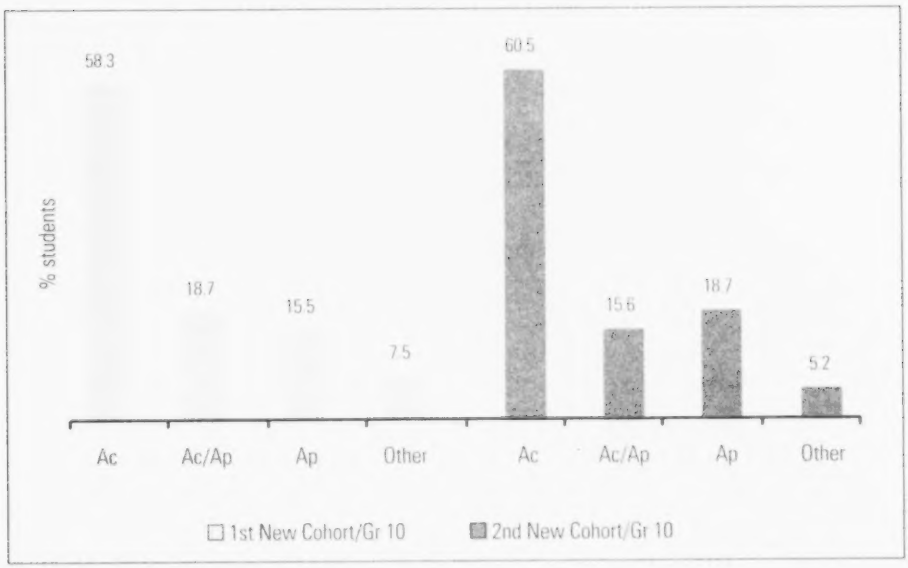
Source: Dr. Alan J.C. King, Principal Investigator, "Double Cohort Study: Phase 2 Report for the Ontario Ministry of Education" - Social Program Education Group, Queen's University, October 17, 2002, p.18.

Figure 1. Year 2000 Ontario Student Flow from Grade 9 to Postsecondary Destinations



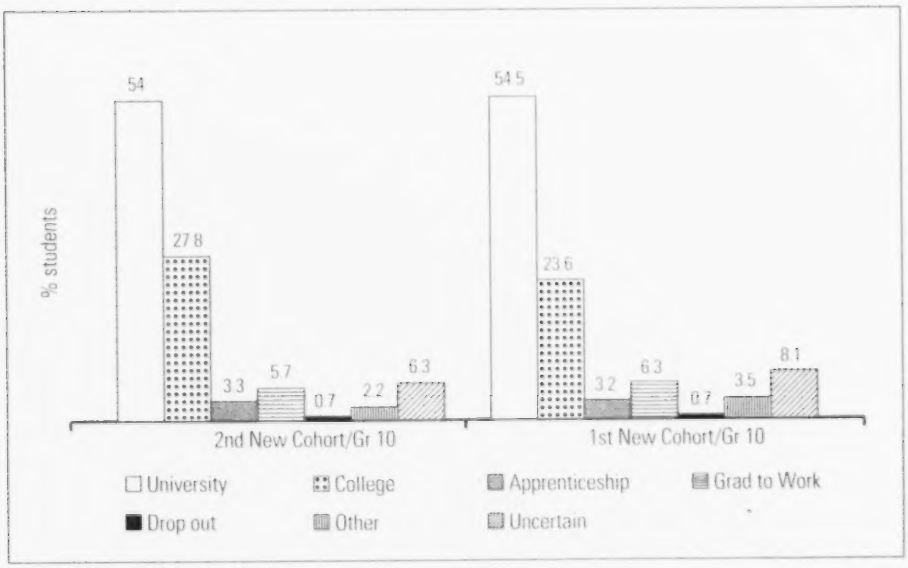
Source: Dr. Alan J.C. King, Principal Investigator, "Double Cohort Study: Phase 2 Report for the Ontario Ministry of Education", Social Program Education Group, Queen's University, October 17, 2002, p.18.

Figure 2. Surveyed Grade 10 Students, by Course Type (1st & 2nd New Cohorts)



Source: King, "Double Cohort Study: Phase 2 Report", p. 15.

Figure 3. Postsecondary Plans of Grade 10 Students (1st & 2nd New Cohorts)



Source: King, "Double Cohort Study: Phase 2 Report", p. 21.

Determining Student Need

While Alan King's study gives the background to estimate the number of students considered at risk within a board, the Board Leader will need to collect and analyse specific data to gain an accurate local perspective. In order for a board or school to develop a list of priorities and set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely) goals, baseline data are required in all aspects related to at-risk outcomes. The Board Leader must put in place a mechanism for relevant data collection. Various sources of data (from among those discussed below) may be used to develop a local board or school profile of the students requiring support and/or program pathway planning.

In order to give an accurate profile of student success patterns, boards should design data collection processes that use, as a baseline, the population of students who enter Grade 9 rather than just examining Grade 12 exit patterns by pathway.

1. Credit Accumulation Study

Previous research indicates that if students do not acquire an adequate number of credits in Grades 9 and 10, their chances of completing credits through to graduation decrease. Data from Student Information Systems providing board and school figures of students earning **fewer than 7 credits at the end of Grade 9 and fewer than 15 credits at the end of Grade 10** will help to identify the number of students who are not achieving success with the existing program options. In general, boards that have completed data analysis report figures of 20% and more falling behind in credit accumulation by the end of Grade 9 and more than 25% falling behind by the end of Grade 10 (see sample data in Appendix 2.4, Sample Comparison of Grade 9 and 10 Credit Accumulation by School, at the end of this section).

2. Problem Attendance Reports

The Board Leader may need to collect data to establish a normal daily attendance pattern in each school and, collectively, across the board. Once this norm is established, problem attendance reports can then be used to determine the number of absences in a month/semester, which could indicate that a student is at risk. Recent studies have indicated that students who have an absentee rate of 11–18% are moderately at risk (2.2–3.6 days/month absent) and students 19% and higher (3.8 days/month and more) are highly at risk. This absentee rate should be compared with the availability of programs and supports in the school and/or accessible in the board. (See research at Toronto District School Board website, www.tdsb.on.ca — Student Success Indicators.)

3. Elementary and Secondary Assessment Result Analysis

Utilizing Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) reports on provincial assessment, the Board Leader can gain insights into the percentage of students in the board and in each family of schools performing at a level considered at risk (level 1, or below grade expectations). **This task will become much more meaningful and accessible once the Ontario Education Number (OEN) has been established and provincial assessment results can be tracked on an individualized basis.**

Ultimately, using the OEN and a specified EQAO number for each student for all assessments will assist in collecting and tracking data on student achievement. Assessment procedures at both the board and school level outside of the Grade 3, 6, 9, and 10 assessments will also provide valuable information on student performance.

Other tools may include literacy level tracking mechanisms, Diagnostic Reading Assessments (DRA), Early Development Instruments, and other local testing strategies that provide early indicators of the percentage of students who may be at risk. In addition, tests results that determine the lowest percentile ranges of performance and corresponding programming availability may provide useful data in the gap analysis.

4. Student Participation in Early Intervention Programs

A review of the number of students enrolled in early intervention programs or who are accessing available supports and remediation, such as tutoring, resource programs, and/or targeted remediation, may give an indication of the number of students considered at risk.

5. Administrative Intervention/Suspension/Expulsion Statistics

Students who are disenfranchised with school are often the students who require administrative intervention for attendance, behavioural, and/or disciplinary issues. This information, along with suspension and expulsion data, will be useful in determining the percentage of students highly at risk in a school and/or board.

6. Literacy Test Results

Students who have not been successful on the Literacy Test, through failing one or both components or being deferred, are at risk of not graduating. Using statistics from EQAO provides a very clear indication of the program and supports that are required in a board or school.

7. Applied Course Medians

Where a school is not providing Grade 9 and/or 10 programming as Locally Developed Compulsory courses, students are frequently enrolled in an applied course. Examining the number of students who are failing or who are not succeeding in applied courses indicates the number of students who may be at risk, in the absence of other options. (See Appendix 2.5, Sample Comparison of Grade 10 Academic and Applied English Marks, at the end of this section.)

8. Students Enrolled in Locally Developed Math, Science, and/or English Courses

The number of students enrolled in Locally Developed Courses (in mathematics, science, and English in both Grade 9 and Grade 10), and student achievement in these courses, should be tracked and monitored to assist with programming decisions.

9. *Registration in Alternative Programs*

Where a school or a board provides alternative options (Transitions Programs, Supervised Alternative Learning for Excused Pupils [S.A.L.E.P.], Independent Learning Courses (ILC), Youth Access, Alternative to Home Suspensions), the type of program and registration numbers can be useful in determining a population of students whose needs are not being met with standard programming and pathway options.

10. Interviews

Anecdotal data collection from interviews with all stakeholders can be useful in determining specific school needs.

11. Correlation of Postsecondary Destinations and Availability of Workplace Preparation Courses

A review of the destinations of students after they leave secondary school will produce a profile of the types of programs that are most beneficial for student preparation. Local labour market needs may also confirm this profile. The program profile should be checked against the program availability in the school and/or across the board.

It should be noted that all the data collection suggested above will produce a general picture of student need in the board/school; however, once this need is established, data collection and tracking will need to be done on an individual basis to ensure each student can access the needed programs and supports. Embedding a mechanism for individual longitudinal tracking is imperative for efficient and effective data collection and program planning.

Determining Program Availability

The baseline data obtained through research should give an indication of the number of students at risk and the type of programming and supports that are needed to offer successful pathway options. The second phase of research requires the Board Leader to determine the types of supports and programs that are in place which can be used to provide support and/or be included in a pathways model.

1. Program Availability

Board Leaders need to work with the Board-level Steering Committee and the School-level Steering Committee to conduct a thorough and comprehensive gap analysis to determine basic program availability and system/school needs.

2. Pathway Availability

Although a school and/or a board may offer numerous courses, programs, and supports to students who are considered at risk, a clear pathway through these courses may not be available. The Board Leader should plot the pathway for specific student schedules to ensure that the individual courses, programs, and supports can be accessed.

The Board Leader should ensure that a variety of school–work transition program pathways are available and transparent. Where students must move to another school to access a program for part or all of a day or a semester, the Board Leader should check to see if supportive transportation and cross-registration procedures are in place.

3. *Local Labour Market Needs*

The Board Leader should access information on local labour market needs. Developing school–work transition program pathways for students who may enter directly into this labour market will be beneficial for both the student and the future employers.

Establishing Measures of Success

Collecting, analysing, and interpreting data are essential in order to measure the success of the different program pathways. To ensure that the pathways meet the needs of students at risk it is important that the success norms be directly linked with the initial data outlined in "Determining Student Need".

Results must be clearly defined and be measurable. Data collecting tools such as surveys of core outcome, interviews, and ongoing statistics can help determine the degree of success of the different program pathways. Students, parents, employers, and teachers should be consulted in the process.

> *"We assess our effectiveness on the basis of results rather than intentions. Individuals, teams and schools seek relevant data and information and use what information to promote continuous improvement."*
>
> *Seneca College, Toronto, discussed in a principals' conference in Toronto, Ontario, 2003*

Planning Professional Development

Under the Students at Risk Initiative, Board Leaders will be responsible for working with central board staff and school staff in the development and implementation of Students at Risk work plans. Among the elements to be included in these annual plans is the **staff training** required for student success.

It is recommended that as part of their work plans Board Leaders include the development and implementation of a comprehensive professional development plan that:

- builds knowledge and understanding;
- activates and cultivates **leaders at all levels**;
- addresses the issue of re-culturing.

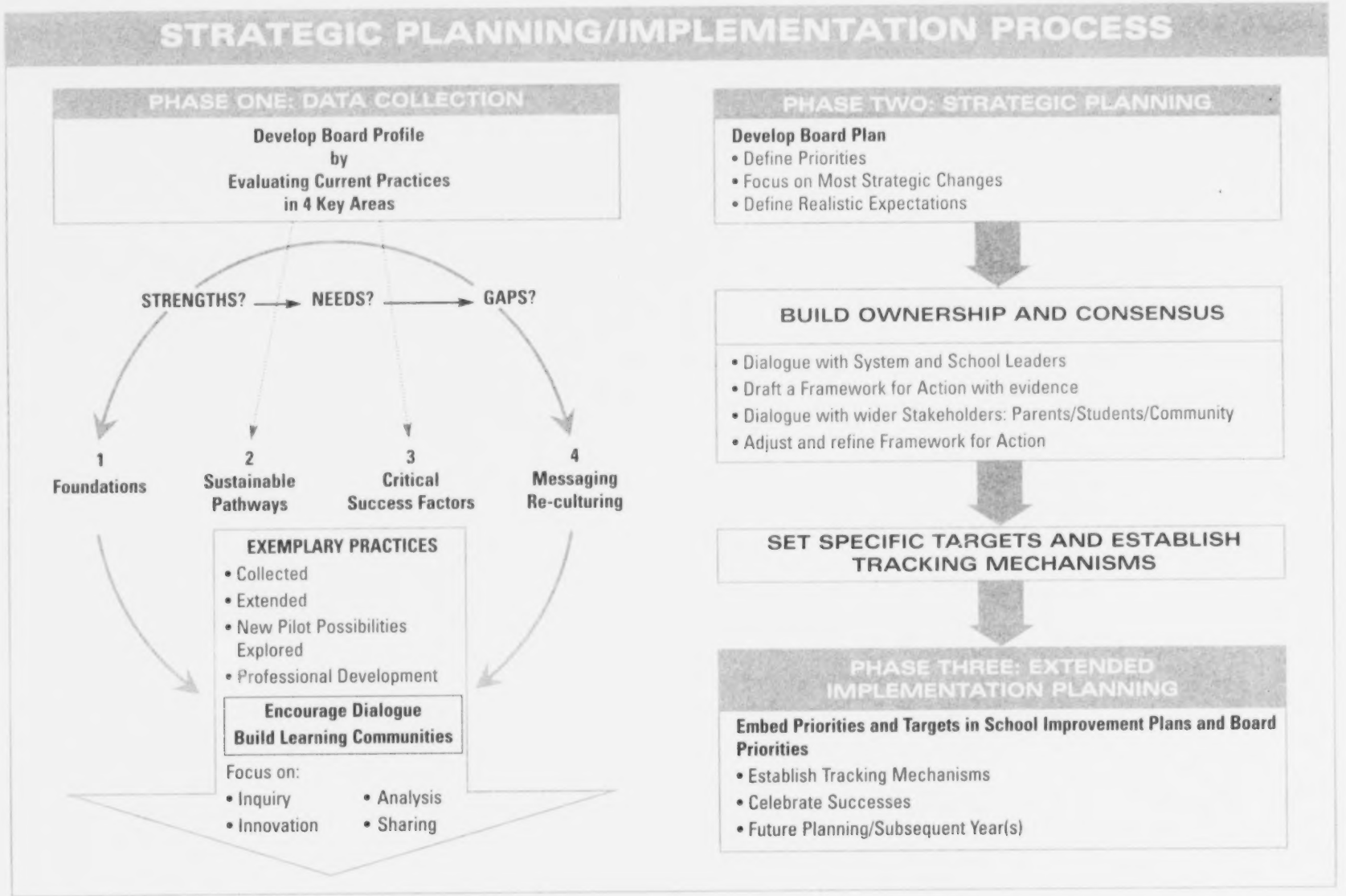
The following individuals need to be included in the in-service plan:

1. Board superintendents, coordinators, consultants
2. School administrators (elementary and secondary)
3. Guidance teachers
4. Department heads and divisional leaders
5. Cooperative Education and Technological Education teachers
6. Elementary and secondary classroom teachers
7. School Literacy and Numeracy leaders
8. Parents

Suggested focus areas (issues and content) of in-service and suggested in-service strategies that Board Leaders might include in their strategic professional development plan are presented in Appendices 2.6 and 2.7, at the end of this section.

Board Leaders are expected to be the catalysts in re-culturing the system. They need to adapt to the challenges and respect the needs of their board and all their students. This can be achieved, in part, by implementing a focused professional development plan. Effective in-service strategies will lead to the creation of active, useful, and productive partnerships.

Appendix 2.1


STRATEGIC PLANNING/IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS
PHASE ONE: DATA COLLECTION
Develop Board Profile
by
Evaluating Current Practices
in 4 Key Areas
STRENGTHS?
NEEDS?
GAPS?
1
Foundations
2
Sustainable
Pathways
3
Critical
Success Factors
4
Messaging
Re-culturing
EXEMPLARY PRACTICES
• Collected
• Extended
• New Pilot Possibilities
Explored
• Professional Development
Encourage Dialogue
Build Learning Communities
Focus on:
• Inquiry
• Analysis
• Innovation
• Sharing
PHASE TWO: STRATEGIC PLANNING
Develop Board Plan
• Define Priorities
• Focus on Most Strategic Changes
• Define Realistic Expectations
BUILD OWNERSHIP AND CONSENSUS
• Dialogue with System and School Leaders
• Draft a Framework for Action with evidence
• Dialogue with wider Stakeholders: Parents/Students/Community
• Adjust and refine Framework for Action
SET SPECIFIC TARGETS AND ESTABLISH
TRACKING MECHANISMS
PHASE THREE: EXTENDED
IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING
Embed Priorities and Targets in School Improvement Plans and Board Priorities
• Establish Tracking Mechanisms
• Celebrate Successes
• Future Planning/Subsequent Year(s)

Appendix 2.2

FOCUS ON NEEDS OF LEARNERS
Shared Commitments

PROGRAM MODEL

Value all pathways equally — Assure success for all students!
Provide a continuum of care, support, and appropriate interventions
Focus on essential learning skills and remediating gaps
Embed career education in all curriculum (*Choices Into Action*)
Design and meet school and board improvement targets

	K – 3	4 – 6	7 – 9	10 – 12
FOCUS	• Early Literacy • Early Numeracy • Essential Learning Skills (Introduced)	• Building Foundation Skills	• Transitions Focus • Essential Learning Skills • Technical and Employability Skills • Multiple Pathways Available to Reach Career Goals	• Access to Specialized Facilities/Programs
PROFILES	• Early Identification Processes • Gr. 3 EQAO Test Scores	• Gr. 6 EQAO Test Scores • Teacher Observations and Assessments	• Involve Parents and Students in the Development of Full Learning, Achievement, and Interest Profiles • Gr. 9 Numeracy Test	• Credit Profile in Relation to Postsecondary Requirements for Each Pathway • Gr. 10 OSSLT
CAREER ED.	• Role Models for All the Pathways	• What Is Work? (Occupation exploration activities)	Career Exploration • Goal Setting • Choice of Possible Pathways • Job Shadowing • "Take Our Kids to Work" Programs • AEPs and IEPs Chart the Pathways	• Curriculum Packages With Career/Pathway Focus • Career Education Credit Course • 40 Hrs Community Service • Embed Employment Readiness Skills • Co-op, OYAP Available • Community-Based Opportunities

Data Gathering: A Suggested Approach

Purpose of data gathering:

Identify current situation within the board with regard to:

- Definition of students considered "at risk"
- Inventory of current programs and pathways
- Inventory of current services and resources
- Identification of gaps and needs — future programming

Identify current situation with a view to:

- Sharing successful practices and transition plans, including elementary to secondary
- Identifying leaders
- Honouring individual achievement
- Expanding/replicating successful practices
- Allocating spending
- Informing PD for Board Leader

Vehicles for data gathering:

These include:

- Survey/questionnaire
- Interviews
- On-site visits
- Review of existing data
- Combination of above

... with a view to providing a school-by-school profile, which could then be used to develop a board profile

Individuals to be targeted as the source for data:

- Secondary school principals
- Superintendents
- Directors of Education
- Coordinators of regional/board-wide programs
- Elementary school principals (Grades 7–8)
- Student Council Chair, etc.

Information to be obtained / Questions to be asked:

(Primary source: Principal)

1. Outline innovative programs in the areas of literacy, numeracy, and program pathways that have been implemented in your school to address the needs of students at risk.
   - Who is the contact person for each program/initiative?
   - Need to define "innovative" and "successful"
2. What are the challenges to the implementation of these innovative programs?
   - What challenges have you successfully dealt with?
   - Why were you successful in addressing this challenge?
   - Which challenges still remain?
   - How can the Board Leader support your school?
3. Have you considered implementing certain programs but decided not to move forward? Explain.
4. Can you identify a person/people in your school who could/would provide leadership in this area?
5. Have you established program linkages (literacy, numeracy, pathways) that benefit your school with:
   a. Community partners
   b. Other schools
   c. Other boards
   - What challenges exist in this area?
6. What are the professional development needs for your staff?
   - Management needs/planning
   - Leadership
   - Training
7. Marketing and communication:
   - What are the challenges you face in counselling students regarding education pathways in secondary school?
   - What information can the Board Leader provide to you to offer more complete messaging?

Build information obtained into existing reporting mechanisms such as School Improvement Plans.

Sample Comparison of Grade 9 and 10 Credit Accumulation by School, 2001–2002

GRADE 9				
School	# Students	8 or More	7	<7
#1	111	87%	5%	8%
#2	145	85%	6%	10%
#3	241	88%	5%	8%
#4	194	88%	4%	8%
#5	106	59%	15%	26%
#6	156	91%	2%	7%
#7	32	84%	3%	13%
#8	281	72%	8%	20%
#9	113	55%	10%	35%
#10	53	74%	4%	23%
#11	212	83%	7%	10%

GRADE 10				
School	# Students	16 or More	15	<15
#1	141	70%	16%	14%
#2	122	67%	11%	22%
#3	237	81%	9%	10%
#4	194	83%	7%	11%
#5	174	62%	7%	31%
#6	167	72%	11%	17%
#7	40	65%	8%	28%
#8	264	64%	13%	24%
#9	244	49%	9%	41%
#10	58	59%	9%	33%
#11	207	74%	12%	14%

Based on 1651 Grade 9 Students			Based on 1848 Grade 10 Students		
8 or more credits	**80%**	1315	**16 or more credits**	**68%**	1261
7 credits	**6%**	102	**15 credits**	**10%**	190
<7 credits	**14%**	234	**<15 credits**	**22%**	397
		1651			1848

Appendix 2.5

Sample Comparison of Grade 10 Academic and Applied English Marks

School	# Credits	<50%	50–59%	60–69%	70–79%	80–100%
#1 ENG2D	**118**	**4%**	**14%**	**25%**	**31%**	**25%**
#1 ENG2P	26	4%	12%	35%	39%	12%
#2 ENG2D	**76**	**3%**	**18%**	**25%**	**32%**	**22%**
#2 ENG2P	41	7%	32%	29%	24%	7%
#3 ENG2D	**186**	**2%**	**10%**	**22%**	**34%**	**32%**
#3 ENG2P	45	9%	22%	24%	27%	18%
#4 ENG2D	**187**	**2%**	**5%**	**15%**	**32%**	**46%**
#4 ENG2P	13	8%	15%	23%	31%	23%
#5 ENG2D	**82**	**4%**	**10%**	**21%**	**33%**	**33%**
#5 ENG2P	39	8%	28%	33%	26%	5%
#6 ENG2D	**97**	**2%**	**11%**	**22%**	**40%**	**25%**
#6 ENG2P	55	4%	24%	33%	33%	7%
#7 ENG2D	**19**	**0%**	**11%**	**32%**	**47%**	**11%**
#7 ENG2P	14	7%	7%	36%	29%	21%
#8 ENG2D	**170**	**2%**	**12%**	**28%**	**26%**	**32%**
#8 ENG2P	92	11%	22%	27%	20%	21%
#9 ENG2D	**84**	**8%**	**24%**	**18%**	**27%**	**23%**
#9 ENG2P	81	17%	36%	25%	19%	4%
#10 ENG2D	**23**	**0%**	**9%**	**17%**	**30%**	**44%**
#10 ENG2P	24	13%	33%	25%	25%	4%
#11 ENG2D	**120**	**2%**	**12%**	**28%**	**33%**	**27%**
#11 ENG2P	73	1%	22%	23%	34%	19%

SUMMARY

ENG2D	% of Students	Student Credits	ENG2P	% of Students	Student Credits
80–100%	31%	359	80–100%	13%	63
70–79%	32%	372	70–79%	26%	132
60–69%	23%	262	60–69%	28%	139
50–59%	12%	138	50–59%	25%	126
0–49%	3%	31	0–49%	9%	43
		1162			503

Suggested Focus Areas of In-service

Issues and Content	Target Group							
	Board Superintendents / Coordinators / Consultants	Administrators	Guidance teachers	Dept. heads / Divisional leaders	Coop. Ed. / Tech. Ed. teachers	Classroom teachers	Literacy / Numeracy leaders	Parents
1. **Re-culturing:** background research, target group (identification and needs); exploring misperceptions; (e.g., presentations such as "Mission Possible — I Coulda Been Somebody", "Pathways to Employability", issues of the heart approach)								
2. Leadership Development: goal setting, change theory								
3. Building Community Partnerships								
4. Marketing and Communication								
5. Timetabling and Scheduling: skills and strategies for pathways (Grades 7–12)								
6. OSSD Requirements and Supports: substitutions, prerequisites, options								
7. Accommodations and Modifications								
8. Classroom Management Strategies								
9. Alternative Disciplinary Measures								
10. Experiential Learning Opportunities								
11. Essential Skills Research linked to Personalized Placement Learning Plan								
12. Certification Opportunities for Students (e.g., WHMIS, Service Excellence, Smart Serve, First Aid, etc.)								
13. New Resources (e.g., "Pathways for Success", "Pathways to Employability")								

Appendix 2.7

Suggested Types of In-service Strategies

In-service Strategies	Target Group							
	Board Superintendents / Coordinators / Consultants	Administrators	Guidance teachers	Dept. heads / Divisional leaders	Coop. Ed. / Tech. Ed. teachers	Classroom teachers	Literacy / Numeracy leaders	Parents
1. **Information sessions:** (presentations, panel discussions) • school board trustees' meeting • open houses • principals' meeting • parent info evenings • department heads' meeting • school staff meeting • school council meeting								
2. **Interactive workshops:** • design-down model (timetabling /scheduling) • hands-on sessions / case studies • sharing sessions • carousels								
3. **Video/audio conferences**								
4. **Visits:** • successful or best practices in model schools								
5. **Resources:** • written (handouts, communiqués) • media • websites								
6. **Guest speakers** (experts, successful practices, resource person)								

Building the Pathways

Rationale

This section is intended to assist school boards, principals, and teachers as they develop school–work transition program pathways to meet the needs of students who may be at risk. It provides:

1. Suggestions and guidelines for the development of programs and models that are consistent with ministry policy.
2. A list and description of the range of student supports currently available under *Ontario Secondary Schools, Grades 9 to 12* (OSS).
3. A list and description of school and system challenges that may be faced by planning teams.
4. A set of planning tools for Board Leaders and their program planning teams.

In the context of this report, the term "school–work transition program pathways" refers to an appropriate and integrated collection of courses and supports that will prepare students for employment immediately on leaving secondary school. Such programs provide students with the opportunity to complete secondary school diploma or certificate requirements, meet the entry-level requirements of a specific industry, develop employability and industry-specific skills, and obtain experience in the workplace. **A successful program provides focus, holds out the prospect of success, develops workplace-specific skills, and gives students hope for their future**.

The approach and information offered in this section are based on the premise that program development and implementation is a "team activity". Each program is developed by a team comprised not only of teachers and administrators but also of community partners such as employers and representatives from community agencies and other organizations.

Directions to Board Leaders

This section assists educators as they strive to meet their obligation to provide programs for all students:

> *School boards must develop school–work transition programs for students intending to enter the work force directly after graduating from high school. School–work transition programs are intended to prepare students for employment or self-employment.*
>
> *OSS, p. 50*

It provides educators with guidelines for the development of school–work transition program pathways that meet the needs of students who are having difficulty meeting diploma requirements and who are likely workplace-destined after secondary school. The guidelines and principles apply to all district school boards and their programs. The majority of the considerations and implications apply to all boards, but they certainly manifest themselves differently from board to board and region to region. Together, they should serve as the basis for planning, implementation, and program review deliberations.

Characteristics of Effective School–Work Transition Program Pathways for Students at Risk

Note: This material is also presented in Appendix 3.1, at the end of this section, in a form convenient for reproduction.

Students at risk need effective and innovative school–work transition programs. These programs must provide opportunities for students to earn credit to meet diploma requirements while also preparing them to proceed directly to employment or self-employment. Effective programs for students at risk share many characteristics. They require the Board Leader and planning teams to:

1. **Have a focused and clearly articulated profile of the student.** Planning teams recognize that students are at risk for a variety of reasons. As such, a one-size, one-approach strategy will not meet the needs of all students at risk.
2. **Consider local labour market information and other data when making decisions.** Planning teams understand that there is a wealth of valuable information and data that can and must drive the decision-making process around programming. They access local industry information that can drive this process.
3. **Search out and utilize authentic resources.** Using authentic documents and resources from the workplace, planning teams develop a cross-curricular, activity/project-based curriculum that introduces and develops the learning, employability, technical, and life skills necessary for students to make seamless transitions from school to work.

4. **Collaborate with a wide range of community partners** in all aspects of program development, implementation, and review. These partners may include, but are not limited to, the business community, organized labour, youth employment services/agencies, industry-education councils, and training and adjustment boards.

5. **Utilize an appropriate combination of courses and supports within OSS,** including learning experiences (both in-school and work-based) that will prepare students to meet the requirements of a specific workplace. These include, but are not limited to, the promotion of the Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC), the use of substitutions, multiple-credit technological education courses, the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC), 220-hour/single-credit courses, and Learning Strategies courses. (See "Supports Within *Ontario Secondary Schools* (OSS)".)

6. **Build in flexibility.** Planning teams understand that student choices are motivated by different factors as well as changing interests and needs. Some students want to explore while others are ready to commit. As a result, planning teams develop programs with multiple entry and exit points.

7. **Include a comprehensive and graduated experiential learning component beginning in Grade 7** that:
   - raises awareness;
   - provides opportunities for career exploration and investigation;
   - provides opportunities to develop specific skills deemed necessary by an industry.

   These activities and experiences may range from guest speakers and industry tours to work experience and full-day cooperative education placements.

8. **Craft a segmented and differentiated communication and marketing strategy.** Planning teams understand that there are many distinct and unique audiences. This necessitates many and varied communication vehicles and marketing campaigns.

9. **Develop a thoughtful and comprehensive implementation strategy that includes an aggressive Professional Development component.** Planning teams understand that, ultimately, the success of these programs rests on the shoulders of classroom teachers. They understand the change process and welcome the challenge of "re-culturing" — changing beliefs and practices. As such, they create a professional development strategy that addresses both the management and the leadership dimension — "the head and the heart".

10. **Staff purposefully.** Teachers who are chosen or who volunteer for these programs are passionate about student success. They are committed to improving achievement and life opportunities for all students. They demonstrate some or all of the following qualities, skills, or characteristics:
    - commitment to student success
    - good communication skills
    - empathy
    - resilience
    - varied and engaging teaching strategies
    - strong classroom management skills
    - knowledge of the workplace
    - commitment to professional learning

A Planning Team Checklist that can be used to assess the extent to which the planning team is considering each of these program characteristics is presented in Appendix 3.2, at the end of this section. Checklists for reviewing programs in relation to graduation requirements for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) and the Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC) are presented in Appendices 3.3 to 3.5, at the end of this section.

An effective school–work transition program pathway for students at risk provides focus, holds out the prospect of success, develops workplace-specific and life skills, and gives students hope for their future. Planning teams know that this is important work but that it takes time to develop the system-capacity, the relationships, and "re-culturing" that are necessary for success.

Supports Within *Ontario Secondary Schools* (OSS)

Note: This material is also presented in Appendix 3.6, at the end of this section, in a form convenient for reproduction.

In an effort to meet the needs of students at risk, school boards regularly make use of deferrals, modifications, and accommodations. In addition to this, boards practise a variety of assessment and evaluation strategies. Where students require support, schools have also responded with specialized remediation programs. These are all very powerful tools in supporting student achievement; however, many other supports available in OSS are less utilized. New, responsive, and supportive programs must consider a full range of supports, and planning teams must make these supports obvious and transparent to all stakeholders.

The range of supports includes:

Locally Developed Compulsory Credit Course(s): Course(s) intended for students whose educational needs are not met by the provincial courses in English, mathematics, and science. Locally developed courses must prepare students for further study in courses from the curriculum policy documents for these disciplines.

Locally Developed Optional Credit Course(s): Course(s) intended to meet the educational needs and interests and/or the career preparation needs of students that are not met by the provincial courses.

Learning Strategies Course(s): Students may take a Learning Strategies credit course designed to help them improve the skills they need to be successful in school. Schools may offer a Learning Strategies course to students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) in each of Grades 9 to 12 and to students who do not have an IEP in Grade 9 and Grade 12.

Multiple-credit Technological Education Course(s): Broad-based technological education courses in Grades 10, 11, and 12 that lead to apprenticeship or certification programs or that are part of the school–work transition programs may be planned for

up to 330 hours of scheduled instructional time (*The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 11 and 12: Technological Education, 2000*). This additional instructional time allows for the practice and refinement of skills needed to raise the quality of students' performance to the levels required for certification, entry into apprenticeship programs, or participation in school–work transition programs. Regardless of the number of credits earned in a broad-based technological education course, a maximum of two cooperative education credits may be tied to any one broad-based technology course.

Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course: The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC) is a full-credit Grade 12 course that is offered as part of the English program in Ontario secondary schools. Students who successfully complete this course will have met the provincial literacy requirement for graduation, and will earn one credit. Students who have been eligible to write the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) at least twice and who have been unsuccessful at least once are eligible to take the course.

Literacy Skills: Reading and Writing (ELS3O): This course is intended to emphasize and strengthen fundamental reading and writing skills.

220-Hour Courses: Some students entering secondary school may need additional instructional time and may benefit from a "high school preparatory program" that provides additional instructional time in Grade 9 and/or 10 courses in English, mathematics, and/or science. As a result, district school boards may offer 220-hour, single-credit, locally developed, optional and compulsory credit courses in English, mathematics, and science to help these students acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to enable them to complete secondary school. All such 220-hour courses will be counted as single-credit courses for the purpose of reporting student achievement. However, boards may consider them as two credits for the purpose of calculating the average number of credits per pupil.

Substitutions: A principal may replace up to three compulsory credits with courses from the remainder of those that meet compulsory credit requirements (OSS, 3.2).

The possibility of 4.5-/5-year programs: Schools may encourage a fifth year of secondary school with the extra year devoted to a cooperative education experience, further skills development through a technological education course, Career Portfolio Development, or a combination of the above.

Accommodations and Modifications: Accommodations are specialized supports and services to enable exceptional students to achieve learning expectations. It is also possible to modify learning expectations. Board Leaders are encouraged to conduct discussions within the board regarding the judicious use of accommodations and modifications to assist students at risk to be successful.

Experiential Learning: Learning acquired wholly or in part through practical experiences is termed "experiential". Experiential learning includes, but is not limited to: job shadowing, job twinning, industry tours, guest speakers, work experience, and cooperative education. Students may engage in experiential learning activities from Grade 7 to Grade 12.

Teacher-Adviser Program (TAP): The purpose of Teacher-Adviser Programs is to help students as they move from elementary to secondary school and as they make decisions about secondary school courses and future goals. Through participation in a Teacher-Adviser Program, students will demonstrate:

- goal-setting, planning, and decision-making skills;
- research and information management skills required for education and career planning;
- the skills and knowledge needed to monitor their academic progress.

Annual Education Plan (AEP): A detailed plan is completed by students each year from Grade 7 to Grade 12, summarizing their learning, interpersonal, and career goals and the actions they intend to take to achieve these goals. Developing an AEP helps students take responsibility for their education, make informed decisions, and plan for their future with the help of parents, teacher-advisers, and guidance counsellors.

Certificate of Accomplishment: Students who leave school before fulfilling the requirements for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) or the Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC) may be granted a certificate of accomplishment.

Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC): The OSSC is granted on request to students who leave school before earning the OSSD provided they have earned a minimum of 14 credits, including 7 compulsory and 7 optional credits.

Other Supports: Other supports include video conferencing courses, e-learning (online) courses, and Independent Learning Courses (ILCs).

Implications for System and School Organization

Effective programs can motivate improved achievement and act as the catalyst to better transitions for all students. There are many implications to the decisions and commitments made to begin, maintain, or expand good programs. Thoughtful consideration, courage, collaboration, and consultation are at the heart of success for these programs. School boards will have to anticipate and address the challenges that may deter and otherwise complicate the planning, development, and implementation of effective programs.

The following implications are of significance but certainly do not represent an exhaustive list. Each board will address barriers and challenges in ways that best respond to its own unique culture, geography, physical and human resources, and most importantly, the needs of its students at risk.

System Leadership

Each school board must provide strong leadership and direction for its "Students at Risk" initiative. "Re-culturing the system" will only be achieved with a united message, strong voice, and visible support. In addition to establishing a clear vision and mission, boards must also allocate appropriate resources to support professional development, staffing, and teacher resources as they move from program planning to program delivery.

School Leadership

Programming for students at risk must be included as part of short- and long-term School Improvement Plans (SIP). These plans must describe programs and related priorities/goals. The SIP provides focus and direction for all stakeholders. Schools will also have to establish site-leadership models that may take the form of steering committees. These form the basis for research and planning teams that will develop and implement programs. Other considerations may include a designated individual who will coordinate the team's efforts and whose responsibility it will be to support staff and to act as the lead advocate for students at risk.

Program Leadership

Innovative programs take much time and effort to develop. They also require tremendous energy to maintain and sustain, especially in the first few months and years. Boards and schools must put in place a mechanism for program-by-program leadership and support. Each program will have to develop and implement its own strategy in a variety of areas: recruitment, marketing, communication, professional development, employer recruitment, and program review. A leader or team may have to organize all of these aspects for each program.

Transportation

To ensure program viability and student access, school boards need to address their existing transportation policy and practices. Additional funding for transportation of students at risk is available through the board's "Students at Risk" initiative. This is over and above current board allotments for transportation and is intended exclusively to support students at risk.

Organizational Considerations

Timetabling — To meet the needs of students at risk, schools may have to rethink and revisit how they timetable. Consideration may be given to year-long timetabling for English and mathematics courses, course packaging, "school-within-a-school" models, and scheduling core curriculum in ways that recognize peak learning times during the day.

Staffing — Teachers are at the core of successful programs and initiatives. When they are timetabling and staffing programs, principals should ensure that teachers assigned to lead the students at risk programs have the proper skills, background, and motivation to deal with the specialized needs of these students.

Full-Service School versus Full-Service System — It may be the case that effective programs have to be hosted by schools that possess the right mix of culture, staff, and adequate facilities. As such, certain secondary schools might not be suited to deliver specialized programs. Given the financial and organizational implications of this, boards may find it necessary to move to a full-service model with clusters and/or magnet schools.

Professional Development

Professional development of teachers, administrators, and senior administration will be at the centre of "re-culturing". Boards will have to invest heavily in developing both the leadership and the management dimension necessary for programs to develop and flourish. The success of a board's professional development plan will have a direct effect on its ability to develop and deliver innovative, relevant, and meaningful programs for its "students at risk" population.

Funding and Budgeting

Schools and boards will be challenged to provide adequate funding to support innovative programs. The associated costs will certainly include teacher in-service, transportation, materials, resources, and capital upgrades, but will also include unforeseen costs (e.g., industry internship programs for teachers). Every effort should be made to identify all potential costs.

Cross-panel Collaboration, Transition Planning, and Appropriate Student Programming

Boards will have to develop or adapt a mechanism to identify students at risk before they arrive at secondary school. This knowledge will facilitate student referral to an appropriate program. Elementary schools should be encouraged to develop an "Early Identification Program" to identify students at risk. These students and their parents should become familiar with the various programs and supports available to them from Grades 7 to 12. Students' experiences should be documented, with such documentation serving as the basis for ongoing communication and planning with cross-panels stakeholders.

Data Collection and Tracking of Students

Boards must put in place a mechanism to collect relevant data that will help to identify students at risk. This data may include: Grade 3, 6, 9, and 10 assessments, attendance records, suspensions, and report card results. Boards and schools must also develop mechanisms to track program results (e.g., track the paths of program graduates or students who have left the program to pursue employment). Such data should inform program improvement plans as well as marketing and communication campaigns.

Marketing and Communication

School boards, together or individually, must develop carefully crafted marketing and communication plans. These plans must address the values, concerns, and interests of multiple target audiences: students, teachers, parents, and employers. Marketing and communication will also play an important role in re-culturing a system and a community.

Community Collaboration and Validation

Effective programs must be developed in collaboration with local employers, labour unions, and community agencies. The community must become an active partner in program development, implementation, and evaluation. The establishment of Community Advisory Committees is an effective way to address and establish specific labour needs, skills, and experiential learning opportunities for students. These will be ongoing relationships that will have to be supported and maintained.

Resources

Sample Programs and Pathways

Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE)
http://www.ontariodirectors.ca/
CODE has collected, and will post on its website, a summary of school–work transition programs for students at risk from district school boards throughout the province.

Pathways for Success: Sample Timetables for Supporting Students at Risk
(Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003). Also available at www.edu.gov.on.ca

This resource provides sample timetables that illustrate ways in which a variety of support strategies and program options can be integrated into programs for students at risk. Eight sample programs are outlined for Grades 9 to 12.

Sample Model

Pathways to Employability Project

The **Pathways to Employability** pilot project has developed school–work transition planning tools, including a generic template for school–work transition programs and nine sector-specific school–work transition program models. Implementation and evaluation of the school–work transition program models will occur during the 2003–2005 school years. These tools will be shared with all the boards in Ontario. Contacts: Lila Read (lila_read@wrdsb.on.ca), Carlos Sousa (carlos.sousa@tcdsb.org), Mary Ellen Frautes (ma.frauts@tvdsb.on.ca), Margaret Stewart (stewartm@limestone.on.ca), Ola Tkaczyk (ola.tkaczyk@dsbn.edu.on.ca).

Program Planning — Practice and Theory

Lynn Olson, *The School-to-Work Revolution* (Reading: Perseus Books, 1997).
ISBN: 0-7382-0029-8

Edward Pauly, Hilary Kopp, Joshua Haimson, *Home-grown Lessons: Innovative Programs Linking School and Work* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995). ISBN: 0-7879-0074-5

Skills-Based Approaches and Resources

Essential Skills Research Project
http://www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/essentialskills

In 1994, Human Resources Development Canada launched a national research study, the Essential Skills Research Project (ESRP), to examine how the essential skills were used in various jobs. These essential skills include: reading text, writing, document use, numeracy (math), computer use, oral communication, working with others, thinking skills, and continuous learning. More than 3000 interviews were conducted across Canada with people working in some 180 occupations. The vast majority of these were entry-level occupations requiring a high school diploma or less.

The Ontario Skills Passport
http://skills.edu.gov.on.ca

The Ontario Skills Passport provides clear descriptions of skill requirements for entry-level work in today's labour market. It also includes work habits deemed to be important by employers at the workplace. The Ontario Skills Passport gives employers a standard way to assess and record work-related skills and work habits demonstrated at the workplace. It gives students and job seekers a record of their demonstration of these skills and work habits at the workplace.

Applications of Working and Learning National Project (AWAL)
http://www.awal.ca

The AWAL National Project is a professional development project for educators. Participants are placed in a variety of workplace environments to help them connect the curriculum they teach in the classroom with how that curriculum is used in the workplace. Using what they learn, participants develop relevant classroom activities that are then stored in an easy-to-use, searchable, electronic database. The AWAL database is available online to anyone searching for ways to bring workplace relevance to classroom activities. Users will find workplace applications of Human Resources Development Canada's nine essential skills.

Test of Workplace Essential Skills
http://www.towes.com/

TOWES is a test of workplace essential skills that has been developed in Canada. The TOWES project now has a bank of test items that, collectively, form an assessment tool to measure essential skills in workplace settings. The test content is based on workplace documents, and responses mimic workplace tasks. TOWES assesses individual ability in the areas of textual reading, document use, and quantitative literacy.

National Occupational Classification (NOC)
http://www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/noc

Since its introduction in 1992, the National Occupational Classification system continues to be the authoritative resource on occupational information in Canada. The NOC is used to understand the jobs found throughout Canada's labour market. This database contains thousands of new occupational titles and descriptions.

Step Into the World of Workplace Learning
http://eservice.nelson.com

This is a collection of authentic workplace materials, such as catalogues, order forms, labels, schematics, regulations, and manuals.

SkillPlan
http://www.skillplan.ca/

SkillPlan is a joint labour and management initiative of the BC construction industry that was established as a not-for profit society in March 1991. The Council is the industry's response to the evolving workplace that requires greater reading, writing, math, problem solving, and oral communication skills. SkillPlan connects the context of construction with learning and produces many resources that incorporate authentic industry resources to develop essential skills.

Sue Grecki and Sheila Whincup, *Writing at Work* (Burnaby, B.C.: BC Construction Industry Skills Council, 2003). ISBN: 0-9685027-4-1

Linda Fownes, Elizabeth Thompson, and Julian Evetts (eds.), *Numeracy at Work* (Burnaby, B.C.: BC Construction Industry Skills Council, 2002). ISBN: 0-9685027-2-5

Julian Evetts, *Document Literacy* (Burnaby, B.C.: BC Construction Industry Skills Council, 1996). ISBN: 0-9697288-9-1

Authentic Workplace Resources

Employers from your community are a rich source of authentic resources. Based on these resources, educators can develop authentic performance tasks to meet curriculum expectations at the same time that they develop workplace-specific competencies, knowledge, and skills.

Youth Services / Employment Agencies

Ontario Association of Youth Employment Centres
http://www.oayec.org/about.html

Since 1988, the Ontario Association of Youth Employment Centres (OAYEC) and its network of over 60 youth employment agencies have been committed to delivering accessible, high-quality, outcomes-based employment services to young people to assist them in reaching their employment and life goals. This site provides background, program details, and a complete list and directory of member organizations.

Organizations Connecting Educators With the Business Community

Ontario Learning Partnership Group
http://www.olpg.on.ca/en/home.htm

The Ontario Learning Partnership Group (OLPG) is a province-wide network of 26 business-education councils, each with extensive partnerships with employers and schools. The OLPG promotes and facilitates mutually beneficial alliances between education, business, community organizations, and government that enhance education and employment opportunities for the students of Ontario.

Local Training Boards
http://www.localboards.on.ca/

Local Training Boards are independent not-for-profit organizations sponsored jointly by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and Human Resources Development Canada. These organizations are made up of volunteers who have demonstrated an interest in employment and training issues in their communities and include representatives of business, labour, educators, trainers, women, francophones, people with disabilities, visible minorities, and other groups that may be relevant to their specific areas.

Labour Market Information

Statistics Canada
http://www.statcan.ca/

Statistics Canada produces statistics that help Canadians better understand their country — its population, resources, economy, society, and culture. Objective statistical information provides the foundation for informed decision making. In addition to conducting a census every five years, there are about 350 active surveys on virtually all aspects of Canadian life.

Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC)
http://www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/

Human Resources Development Canada administers the Employment Insurance Act, the Canada Pension Plan, the Old Age Security Act, and the Canadian Labour Code with the objective of enhancing employment, encouraging equality, and promoting social security. HRDC has a wealth of information and data that can and should inform many programming decisions.

Characteristics of Effective School–Work Transition Program Pathways for Students at Risk

Students at risk need effective and innovative school–work transition programs. These programs must provide opportunities for students to earn credit to meet diploma requirements while also preparing them to proceed directly to employment or self-employment. Effective programs for students at risk share many characteristics. They require the Board Leader and planning teams to:

1. **Have a focused and clearly articulated profile of the student.** Planning teams recognize that students are at risk for a variety of reasons. As such, a one-size, one-approach strategy will not meet the needs of all students at risk.

2. **Consider local labour market information and other data when making decisions.** Planning teams understand that there is a wealth of valuable information and data that can and must drive the decision-making process around programming. They access local industry information that can drive this process.

3. **Search out and utilize authentic resources.** Using authentic documents and resources from the workplace, planning teams develop a cross-curricular, activity/project-based curriculum that introduces and develops the learning, employability, technical, and life skills necessary for students to make seamless transitions from school to work.

4. **Collaborate with a wide range of community partners** in all aspects of program development, implementation, and review. These partners may include, but are not limited to, the business community, organized labour, youth employment services/agencies, industry-education councils, and training and adjustment boards.

5. **Utilize an appropriate combination of courses and supports within OSS,** including learning experiences (both in-school and work-based) that will prepare students to meet the requirements of a specific workplace. These include, but are not limited to, the promotion of the Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC), the use of substitutions, multiple-credit technological education courses, the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC), 220-hour/single-credit courses, and Learning Strategies courses. (See "Supports Within *Ontario Secondary Schools* (OSS)".)

6. **Build in flexibility.** Planning teams understand that student choices are motivated by different factors as well as changing interests and needs. Some students want to explore while others are ready to commit. As a result, planning teams develop programs with multiple entry and exit points.

7. **Include a comprehensive and graduated experiential learning component beginning in Grade 7** that:

   - raises awareness;
   - provides opportunities for career exploration and investigation;
   - provides opportunities to develop specific skills deemed necessary by an industry.

   These activities and experiences may range from guest speakers and industry tours to work experience and full-day cooperative education placements.

8. **Craft a segmented and differentiated communication and marketing strategy.** Planning teams understand that there are many distinct and unique audiences. This necessitates many and varied communication vehicles and marketing campaigns.

9. **Develop a thoughtful and comprehensive implementation strategy that includes an aggressive Professional Development component.** Planning teams understand that, ultimately, the success of these programs rests on the shoulders of classroom teachers. They understand the change process and welcome the challenge of "re-culturing" — changing beliefs and practices. As such, they create a professional development strategy that addresses both the management and the leadership dimension — "the head and the heart".

10. **Staff purposefully.** Teachers who are chosen or who volunteer for these programs are passionate about student success. They are committed to improving achievement and life opportunities for all students. They demonstrate some or all of the following qualities, skills, or characteristics:

    - commitment to student success
    - good communication skills
    - empathy
    - resilience
    - varied and engaging teaching strategies
    - classroom management skills
    - knowledge of the workplace
    - commitment to professional learning

An effective school–work transition program pathway for students at risk provides focus, holds out the prospect of success, develops workplace-specific and life skills, and gives students hope for their future. Planning teams know that this is important work but that it takes time to develop the system-capacity, the relationships, and "re-culturing" that are necessary for success.

PLANNING TEAM CHECKLIST

Use the four-point scale below to assess the extent to which your planning team is considering each of the "Characteristics of Effective Programs for Students at Risk".

1	2	3	4
We have not considered this issue at all.	*We have begun to discuss this issue and know that it is important, but we need more information before we commit to action.*	*We have identified this as an important issue and have developed a preliminary plan of action.*	*We have invested considerable time and discussion in this issue and have people and mechanisms in place to ensure that this happens.*

Does your planning team ...	1	2	3	4
1. Have a focused and clearly articulated profile of the student?				
2. Consider local labour market information and other data when making decisions?				
3. Search out and utilize authentic resources?				
4. Collaborate with a wide range of community partners?				
Does your program ...	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
5. Utilize an appropriate combination of courses and supports within OSS?				
6. Build in flexibility?				
7. Include a comprehensive and graduated experiential learning component beginning in Grade 7?				
Has your planning team considered how to ...	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
8. Craft a segmented and differentiated communication and marketing strategy?				
9. Develop a thoughtful and comprehensive implementation strategy that includes an aggressive Professional Development component?				
10. Staff purposefully?				

Appendix 3.3

CHECKLIST FOR OSSD REQUIREMENTS
— Catholic Boards —

Does your program meet all graduation requirements?

Compulsory Credits (18)	➤	Identify courses used as substitutions (up to three)	Comments (e.g., Locally Developed Compulsory / Optional Courses, etc.)
English (Grade 9)			
English (Grade 10)			
English (Grade 11)			
English (Grade 12)			
French (FSL)			
Math			
Math			
Math (Grade 11 or 12)			
Science			
Science			
Canadian Geography (Grade 9)			
Canadian History (Grade 10)			
Arts			
Health and Physical Education			
.5 Civics (Grade 10)			
.5 Career Studies (Grade 10)			
Group 1: English OR Third Language OR Social Sciences and Humanities OR Canadian and World Studies			
Group 2: Health and Physical Education OR Arts OR Business Studies			
Group 3: Science (Grade 11 or 12) OR Technological Education			
Optional Credits (12), including:			
Religion (Grade 9)	❑		
Religion (Grade 10)	❑		
Religion (Grade 11)	❑		
Religion (Grade 12)	❑		

Community Involvement ❑ **Literacy Test** ❑

CHECKLIST FOR OSSD REQUIREMENTS
— Public Boards —

Does your program meet all graduation requirements?

Compulsory Credits (18)	➤	Identify courses used as substitutions (up to three)	Comments (e.g., Locally Developed Compulsory / Optional Courses, etc.)
English (Grade 9)			
English (Grade 10)			
English (Grade 11)			
English (Grade 12)			
French (FSL)			
Math			
Math			
Math (Grade 11 or 12)			
Science			
Science			
Canadian Geography (Grade 9)			
Canadian History (Grade 10)			
Arts			
Health and Physical Education			
.5 Civics (Grade 10)			
.5 Career Studies (Grade 10)			
Group 1: English OR Third Language OR Social Sciences and Humanities OR Canadian and World Studies			
Group 2: Health and Physical Education OR Arts OR Business Studies			
Group 3: Science (Grade 11 or 12) OR Technological Education			
Optional Credits (12 in Total)			

Community Involvement ❑ **Literacy Test** ❑

Appendix 3.5

CHECKLIST FOR OSSC REQUIREMENTS
— Catholic and Public Boards —

Does your program meet all certificate requirements?

Compulsory Credits (7)	➤	Identify courses used as substitutions (up to three)	Comments (e.g., Locally Developed Compulsory / Optional Courses, etc.)
English			
English			
Math			
Science			
Canadian History OR Geography			
Arts OR Technological Education			
Health and Physical Education			

Optional Credits (7)	Comments:

SUPPORTS WITHIN *ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOLS* (OSS)

In an effort to meet the needs of students at risk, school boards regularly make use of deferrals, modifications, and accommodations. In addition to this, boards practise a variety of assessment and evaluation strategies. Where students require support, schools have also responded with specialized remediation programs. These are all very powerful tools in supporting student achievement; however, many other supports available in OSS are less utilized. New, responsive, and supportive programs must consider a full range of supports, and planning teams must make these supports obvious and transparent to all stakeholders.

The range of supports include:

Locally Developed Compulsory Credit Course(s): Course(s) intended for students whose educational needs are not met by the provincial courses in English, mathematics, and science. Locally developed courses must prepare students for further study in courses from the curriculum policy documents for these disciplines.

Locally Developed Optional Credit Course(s): Course(s) intended to meet the educational needs and interests and/or the career preparation needs of students that are not met by the provincial courses.

Learning Strategies Course(s): Students may take a Learning Strategies credit course designed to help them improve the skills they need to be successful in school. Schools may offer a Learning Strategies course to students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) in each of Grades 9 to 12 and to students who do not have an IEP in Grade 9 and Grade 12.

Multiple-credit Technological Education Course(s): Broad-based technological education courses in Grades 10, 11, and 12 that lead to apprenticeship or certification programs or that are part of the school–work transition programs may be planned for up to 330 hours of scheduled instructional time (*The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 11 and 12: Technological Education, 2000*). This additional instructional time allows for the practice and refinement of skills needed to raise the quality of students' performance to the levels required for certification, entry into apprenticeship programs, or participation in school–work transition programs. Regardless of the number of credits earned in a broad-based technological education course, a maximum of two cooperative education credits may be tied to any one broad-based technology course.

Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course: The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC) is a full-credit Grade 12 course that is offered as part of the English program in Ontario secondary schools. Students who successfully complete this course will have met the provincial literacy requirement for graduation, and will earn one credit. Students who have been eligible to write the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) at least twice and who have been unsuccessful at least once are eligible to take the course.

Literacy Skills: Reading and Writing (ELS3O): This course is intended to emphasize and strengthen fundamental reading and writing skills.

220-Hour Courses: Some students entering secondary school may need additional instructional time and may benefit from a "high school preparatory program" that provides additional instructional time in Grade 9 and/or 10 courses in English, mathematics,

and/or science. As a result, district school boards may offer 220-hour, single credit, locally developed, optional and compulsory credit courses in English, mathematics, and science to help these students acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to enable them to complete secondary school. All such 220-hour courses will be counted as single-credit courses for the purpose of reporting student achievement. However, boards may consider them as two credits for the purpose of calculating the average number of credits per pupil.

Substitutions: A principal may replace up to three compulsory credits with courses from the remainder of those that meet compulsory credit requirements (OSS, 3.2).

The possibility of 4.5-/5-year programs: Schools may encourage a fifth year of high school with the extra year devoted to a cooperative education experience, further skills development through a technological education course, Career Portfolio Development, or a combination of the above.

Modifications and Accommodations: Accommodations are specialized supports and services to enable exceptional students to achieve learning expectations. It is also possible to modify learning expectations. Board leaders are encouraged to conduct discussions within the board regarding the judicious use of accommodations and modifications to assist students at risk to be successful.

Experiential Learning: Learning acquired wholly or in part through practical experiences is termed "experiential". Experiential learning includes, but is not limited to: job shadowing, job twinning, industry tours, guest speakers, work experience, and cooperative education. Students may engage in experiential learning activities from Grade 7 to Grade 12.

Teacher-Adviser Program (TAP): The purpose of Teacher-Adviser Programs is to help students as they move from elementary to secondary school and as they make decisions about secondary school courses and future goals. Through participation in a Teacher-Adviser Program, students will demonstrate:

- goal-setting, planning, and decision-making skills;
- research and information management skills required for education and career planning;
- the skills and knowledge needed to monitor their academic progress.

Annual Education Plan (AEP): A detailed plan is completed by students each year from Grade 7 to Grade 12, summarizing their learning, interpersonal, and career goals and the actions they intend to take to achieve these goals. Developing an AEP helps students take responsibility for their education, make informed decisions, and plan for their future with the help of parents, teacher-advisers, and guidance counsellors.

Certificate of Accomplishment: Students who leave school before fulfilling the requirements for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) or the Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC) may be granted a certificate of accomplishment.

Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC): The OSSC is granted on request to students who leave school before earning the OSSD provided they have earned a minimum of 14 credits, including 7 compulsory and 7 optional credits.

Other Supports: Other supports include video conferencing courses, e-learning (on-line) courses, and Independent Learning Courses (ILCs).

Building and Enhancing Opportunities for Success

Rationale

The information provided in this section is based on the premise that the most effective strategies are those that are proactive and preventative rather than those that "fix" a problem. Information found here will primarily focus on strategies to be used in Grades 7 to 10. The "Critical Success Factors" identified here focus specifically on program pathways and ways to assist students and parents to make appropriate program and course choices to maximize the potential for success.

School/Board Improvement Plans must include strategies that will create the environment for all students to be successful. There are many existing successful practices that need to be shared between boards and need to be built upon to improve students' chances for success. It is imperative that boards and schools collect data to monitor and track their progress towards success for all. A review of all structures, practices, and processes is recommended to ensure that there are not systemic barriers to student success.

Critical Success Factors

This section contains a series of "Critical Success Factors". It is believed, and supported by research, that if these factors are in place, the potential for success for all students rises. For each Critical Success Factor we have included strategies to build or enhance this factor in a school.

The primary research that has been used comes from the work done by Professor Ken Leithwood of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) with the Toronto District School Board. In his study, Professor Leithwood looked at factors that school leaders should consider as they develop policies, processes, practices, and programs to build for success in the school. The Critical Success Factors that follow in this section connect to the five focus areas as identified by Professor Leithwood. A chart has been included in Appendix 4.1, at the end of this section, to summarize those connections.

Many of these factors are already in place in schools but may need some refinement or enhancement. Board Leaders may wish to begin their work by reviewing board and school practices that are inconsistent with these factors and, through dialogue with key members of the organization, make some decisions about first priorities for the Board Improvement Plan. The list of strategies is not all-inclusive but, rather, should be used as a starting point to develop further approaches to meet local needs and priorities.

Building and Enhancing Opportunities for Success: Critical Success Factors

1. Students continually develop and expand their understanding of their strengths, abilities, and interests and use this knowledge in goal-setting processes involving self-awareness and self-advocacy.
2. School boards will provide a full variety of school–work transition program pathways, and students will have access to all of these programs based on a sound understanding of their interests, abilities, and goals.
3. Parents have a complete knowledge and understanding of the goals, purposes, characteristics, and values of all program pathways and are actively involved with students and the school in determining pathway directions.
4. All school staff are aware of, and value, the nature and purpose of all program pathways to better assist students to make appropriate choices.
5. Students are supported through all developmental transitions (e.g., Grades 6 to 7, Grades 8 to 9, Grades 10 to 11), with a particular focus on students at risk.
6. Early intervention strategies and continuous monitoring optimize student success.
7. All program pathways are characterized by the flexible use of time, space, location, and program delivery and the allocation of adequate resources to support them.
8. Community partnerships are established to ensure a wide variety of meaningful and significant experiential learning opportunities.
9. Students are fully engaged in all curricula through the frequent and consistent linking of course content and skills to the world beyond school.
10. Teaching strategies address the wide variety of student learning styles.
11. Board and school policies, processes, practices, and support systems are designed to meet the needs of **all** students.
12. Teachers are aware of grade-level curriculum expectations and their relationship to previous and subsequent grades.
13. At all stages, remediation processes and strategies are in place to meet the full range of student needs, abilities, and goals.
14. Boards and schools conduct ongoing data gathering and evaluation related to structures and practices that support successful program pathways.
15. Students learn best in an environment that is safe, secure, and supportive of their individual learning needs.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

1. Students continually develop and expand their understanding of their strengths, abilities, and interests and use this knowledge in goal-setting processes involving self-awareness and self-advocacy.

1	2	3	4
We have not considered this strategy.	*We have begun to discuss this strategy and know that it is important, but we need more information before we commit to action.*	*We have identified this as an important strategy and have developed a preliminary plan of action.*	*We have invested considerable time and discussion in this strategy and have people and mechanisms in place to ensure that this happens.*

Strategies	Level of Implementation			
	1	2	3	4
Expand the Teacher-Adviser Program (TAP) in Grades 6 to 9 to focus on Career Exploration and the accurate and focused completion of the AEP. *Resource:* www.osca.ca Teacher Adviser Groups, Grade 7 & 8 (Nelson Publishing).				
Use skills, abilities, and interest inventories to guide students in goal setting.				
Involve students in school or community activities as a critical part of developing social skills.				
Utilize the *Choices Into Action* policy in Grades 6 to 11 to focus on areas such as goal setting, self-awareness, self-advocacy, and career portfolios. *Resource: Choices Into Action*				
Expand students' interests and understanding of potential career possibilities through a variety of activities such as community field trips, tours, and job-shadowing opportunities.				
Utilize events and competitions hosted by community organizations (e.g., Skills Canada/Ontario) to help promote and test students' interests and aptitudes. *Resource:* www.skillscanada.com				

2. School boards will provide a full variety of school–work transition program pathways, and students will have access to all of these programs based on a sound understanding of their interests, abilities, and goals.

1	2	3	4
We have not considered this strategy.	*We have begun to discuss this strategy and know that it is important, but we need more information before we commit to action.*	*We have identified this as an important strategy and have developed a preliminary plan of action.*	*We have invested considerable time and discussion in this strategy and have people and mechanisms in place to ensure that this happens.*

Strategies	Level of Implementation			
	1	2	3	4
Provide information and counselling to students for appropriate course selection based on their developing interests, abilities, and goals.				
Develop transportation plans for the board that allow students the opportunities to access programs of their choice.				
Develop plans that allow for all programs to be accessible to all students through "magnet" schools, clusters of schools, or full-service schools.				
Provide greater access to courses through flexible timetabling that may include alternative instructional models such as online courses, correspondence courses, and/or continuing education courses.				
Develop processes to facilitate cross-school and cross-board student registration to allow students to access program pathways that may not be available in their home school.				

3. Parents have a complete knowledge and understanding of the goals, purposes, characteristics, and values of all program pathways and are actively involved with students and the school in determining pathway directions.

1	2	3	4
We have not considered this strategy.	*We have begun to discuss this strategy and know that it is important, but we need more information before we commit to action.*	*We have identified this as an important strategy and have developed a preliminary plan of action.*	*We have invested considerable time and discussion in this strategy and have people and mechanisms in place to ensure that this happens.*

Strategies	Level of Implementation			
	1	2	3	4
Provide information to parents through brochures, pamphlets, newsletters, school course calendars, websites, and/or other electronic means.				
Utilize existing community personnel and resources such as sector councils, business councils, Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), and Skills Canada.				
Engage school councils in the process of educating/informing the parent community regarding all program pathways.				
Promote all program pathways and destinations for students through parent information fairs, dialogue days, thematic nights, or career fairs beginning in Grade 6.				

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

4. All school staff are aware of, and value, the nature and purpose of all program pathways to better assist students to make appropriate choices.

1	2	3	4
We have not considered this strategy.	*We have begun to discuss this strategy and know that it is important, but we need more information before we commit to action.*	*We have identified this as an important strategy and have developed a preliminary plan of action.*	*We have invested considerable time and discussion in this strategy and have people and mechanisms in place to ensure that this happens.*

Strategies	Level of Implementation			
	1	2	3	4
Train all guidance counsellors so that they will become fully informed about all program pathways and their related destinations.				
Provide discussion and information sessions for teachers, involving sector councils, business partners, and employers, so that classroom teachers may better assist students to make appropriate program choices.				
Provide opportunities for classroom teachers to make connection with employers/workplace in the community.				
Encourage teachers to include in their Annual Learning Plan (ALP) strategies to raise their awareness of all program pathways.				
Provide PD opportunities for all teachers, Grades 6 to 9, and administrators, to increase their understanding of all program pathways and destinations.				

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

5. Students are supported through all developmental transitions (e.g., Grades 6 to 7, Grades 8 to 9, Grades 10 to 11) with a particular focus on students at risk.

1	2	3	4
We have not considered this strategy.	*We have begun to discuss this strategy and know that it is important, but we need more information before we commit to action.*	*We have identified this as an important strategy and have developed a preliminary plan of action.*	*We have invested considerable time and discussion in this strategy and have people and mechanisms in place to ensure that this happens.*

Strategies	Level of Implementation			
	1	2	3	4
Provide opportunities for cross-panel student-to-student mentoring.				
Develop a process that facilitates the sharing of student information, learning styles, interests, abilities, needs, and goals to guide program development in Grades 7 to 10.				
Develop effective transition programs from Grades 8 to 9 that support students in adjusting to curriculum, program, and social expectations in secondary school. *Resource:* "Getting Ready for High School" (Durham DSB)				
Develop a working relationship between elementary and secondary teachers in a family of schools.				
Utilize community resources and partnerships (e.g., offsite Grade 9 orientation programs) to facilitate the transition to secondary schools.				

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

6. Early intervention strategies and continuous monitoring optimize student success.

1	2	3	4
We have not considered this strategy.	*We have begun to discuss this strategy and know that it is important, but we need more information before we commit to action.*	*We have identified this as an important strategy and have developed a preliminary plan of action.*	*We have invested considerable time and discussion in this strategy and have people and mechanisms in place to ensure that this happens.*

Strategies	Level of Implementation			
	1	2	3	4
Develop board and school processes to track progress of students at risk.				
Structure instruction to include consistent and frequent opportunities for in-class remediation and support and gap-closing strategies.				
Utilize a variety of gap-closing strategies such as homework clubs, family math, peer tutoring, and online supports.				
Include community volunteers and parent teams to support student learning.				
Train and support teachers to implement strategies to provide accommodations (program and curriculum) to meet individual student needs in the regular classrooms.				

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

7. All program pathways are characterized by the flexible use of time, space, location, and program delivery and the allocation of adequate resources to support them.

1	2	3	4
We have not considered this strategy.	*We have begun to discuss this strategy and know that it is important, but we need more information before we commit to action.*	*We have identified this as an important strategy and have developed a preliminary plan of action.*	*We have invested considerable time and discussion in this strategy and have people and mechanisms in place to ensure that this happens.*

Strategies	Level of Implementation			
	1	2	3	4
Develop a variety of models that permit the flexible use of time (e.g., 220-hour credits, self-paced instruction, mastery learning, extended course time, virtual schools) to optimize learning for all students.				
Examine alternative structures for organizing schools, such as block timetabling, grade academies, team teaching, partial credits, semestered/desemestered, and/or continuing education.				
Develop board and school plans that reflect a distribution of resources to support all program pathways.				
Implement plans that demonstrate the fair allocation of resources to support programs for students at risk in direct proportion to the number of students registered in these courses.				
Implement plans that provide leadership in specific program coordination to meet the needs of individual students.				

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

8. Community partnerships are established to ensure a wide variety of meaningful and significant experiential learning opportunities.

1	2	3	4
We have not considered this strategy.	*We have begun to discuss this strategy and know that it is important, but we need more information before we commit to action.*	*We have identified this as an important strategy and have developed a preliminary plan of action.*	*We have invested considerable time and discussion in this strategy and have people and mechanisms in place to ensure that this happens.*

Strategies	Level of Implementation			
	1	2	3	4
Develop an expanded range of community and workplace learning opportunities related to all program pathways.				
Develop community-based experiences that include exploration experiences for Grades 7 and 8, foundation skills/career education courses for Grades 9 and 10, and pathways-specific curriculum for Grades 11 and 12.				
Expand the range of cooperative education programs in conjunction with community partners (Industry/Education Councils, Passport to Prosperity, colleges).				
Invite school councils to help build the menu of workplace opportunities and business partnerships.				
Promote school/board initiatives and partnerships through community information meetings.				

9. Students are fully engaged in all curricula through the frequent and consistent linking of course content and skills to the world beyond school.

1	2	3	4
We have not considered this strategy.	*We have begun to discuss this strategy and know that it is important, but we need more information before we commit to action.*	*We have identified this as an important strategy and have developed a preliminary plan of action.*	*We have invested considerable time and discussion in this strategy and have people and mechanisms in place to ensure that this happens.*

Strategies	Level of Implementation			
	1	2	3	4
Develop a curriculum that focuses on "Choices Into Action" and that links to all program pathways possibilities. *Resource:* "PSST! Promoting Skilled Trades & Technology Initiative" (York Region)				
Bring teachers of Grades 7, 8, and 9 together to examine and identify the continuum of skills and knowledge expectations as found in the curriculum.				
Conduct training sessions for all teachers that highlight how to teach and assess learning skills and how to connect them to employability skills.				
Expand experiential learning opportunities for all students through cooperative education, job shadowing, and/or site visits.				
Provide ongoing opportunities for students to attend career days that feature speakers who represent a cross-section of all potential program pathways.				
Develop integrated programs that demonstrate the true relationship between theory and practice (e.g., math, science, and technology). *Resource: The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 11 and 12: Interdisciplinary Studies, 2002* (Ontario Ministry of Education)				

10. Teaching strategies address the wide variety of student learning styles.

1	2	3	4
We have not considered this strategy.	*We have begun to discuss this strategy and know that it is important, but we need more information before we commit to action.*	*We have identified this as an important strategy and have developed a preliminary plan of action.*	*We have invested considerable time and discussion in this strategy and have people and mechanisms in place to ensure that this happens.*

Strategies	Level of Implementation			
	1	2	3	4
Design staff development that consistently reflects the value that "All Students Can Learn".				
Train all teachers in the principles of instructional strategies, such as Multiple and Emotional Intelligences and brain research, to determine how to address the varied learning styles of all students. *Resource:* Barrie Brent Bennett, *Beyond Monet, The Artful Science of Instructional Integration* (Toronto: Bookation, c2001).				
Train all teachers in the design and delivery of authentic assessment and performance-based assessment to discover how well students have learned (i.e., reduce the focus on just written assessment). *Resource:* "Assessment Learning for York Region Schools: A Professional Development Resource". *Policy to Practice: A Teacher Resource Document to Support Implementation of the Ontario Provincial Secondary Assessment Policy* (Consortium of Ontario School Boards and CODE; available from University of Waterloo Press).				
Train teachers to use purposeful classroom groupings to optimize learning and remedial support.				

11. Board and school policies, processes, practices, and support systems are designed to meet the needs of all students.

1	2	3	4
We have not considered this strategy.	*We have begun to discuss this strategy and know that it is important, but we need more information before we commit to action.*	*We have identified this as an important strategy and have developed a preliminary plan of action.*	*We have invested considerable time and discussion in this strategy and have people and mechanisms in place to ensure that this happens.*

Strategies	Level of Implementation			
	1	2	3	4
Review all board and school policies, process, practices, and support systems to ensure that they are not barriers to student success.				
Review policies to ensure that homework is used to prepare for, or reinforce, classroom learning and is appropriate to the needs of the individual student.				
Develop homework support mechanisms such as a homework hotline, homework clubs, online support, or mentoring programs.				
Develop or expand cross-panel/cross-grade tutoring opportunities.				

12. Teachers are aware of grade-level curriculum expectations and their relationship to previous and subsequent grades.

1	2	3	4
We have not considered this strategy.	*We have begun to discuss this strategy and know that it is important, but we need more information before we commit to action.*	*We have identified this as an important strategy and have developed a preliminary plan of action.*	*We have invested considerable time and discussion in this strategy and have people and mechanisms in place to ensure that this happens.*

Strategies	Level of Implementation			
	1	2	3	4
Establish learning communities among teachers of Grades 7 to 10 with a focus on providing a continuum of learning and support for all students.				
Develop a continuum of skills and knowledge to guide teachers in prioritizing the delivery of curriculum expectations in the classroom.				
Develop a set of enduring expectations for each subject area for each grade level.				
Develop a relationship between teachers in elementary and secondary schools to build a successful bridge for all students.				
Provide release time for elementary and secondary intermediate teachers to shadow their counterparts in the other panel.				

13. At all stages, remediation processes and strategies are in place to meet the full range of student needs, abilities, and goals.

1	2	3	4
We have not considered this strategy.	*We have begun to discuss this strategy and know that it is important, but we need more information before we commit to action.*	*We have identified this as an important strategy and have developed a preliminary plan of action.*	*We have invested considerable time and discussion in this strategy and have people and mechanisms in place to ensure that this happens.*

Strategies	Level of Implementation			
	1	2	3	4
Train teachers to use student profiles to identify those who may be in need of remediation.				
Train teachers in the implementation of strategies and accommodations as identified in a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).				
Develop remediation strategies such as grouping, peer support, teaching assistants, and/or use of volunteers to assist in the classroom.				
Develop remediation strategies such as summer school camps and after-school and lunchtime programs to meet the full range of student needs.				
Extend the use of assistive technologies (text to speech, speech to text, word prediction, graphic organizers) to students at risk.				

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

14. Boards and schools conduct ongoing data gathering and evaluation related to structures and practices that support successful program pathways.

1	2	3	4
We have not considered this strategy.	*We have begun to discuss this strategy and know that it is important, but we need more information before we commit to action.*	*We have identified this as an important strategy and have developed a preliminary plan of action.*	*We have invested considerable time and discussion in this strategy and have people and mechanisms in place to ensure that this happens.*

Strategies	Level of Implementation			
	1	2	3	4
Develop data-collection and data-tracking strategies to inform board and school decision-making to deal with students at risk.				
Incorporate research into the evaluation of pilot projects.				
Incorporate the EQAO data available from Grades 3, 6, 9, and 10 assessment to develop early identification and monitoring of potential students at risk.				
Collect student exit data to fully understand and track student pathways after leaving secondary school, to assist in program planning.				

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

15. Students learn best in an environment that is safe, secure, and supportive of their individual learning needs.

1	2	3	4
We have not considered this strategy.	*We have begun to discuss this strategy and know that it is important, but we need more information before we commit to action.*	*We have identified this as an important strategy and have developed a preliminary plan of action.*	*We have invested considerable time and discussion in this strategy and have people and mechanisms in place to ensure that this happens.*

Strategies	Level of Implementation			
	1	2	3	4
Establish a healthy, safe, collaborative, and respectful learning environment throughout the school so that students feel valued and safe (e.g., Tribes Training, Character Education Programs, Catholic Graduation Expectations).				
Establish partnerships with community agencies to support the social/emotional and academic needs of students.				
Address gaps in student learning in order to engage students and to maximize their access to the program pathway of their choice.				
Develop processes that recognize the abilities and successes of each student (e.g., Student of the Month, Future Aces).				
Develop a process that recognizes success in all program pathways.				

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Focus Areas and Critical Success Factors

A. Focus Areas and Related Concepts

FOCUS AREA	CONCEPTS
Focus A Social Skills Cultural Values Dialogue and Support With Community	• Family Education Culture • Social Capital • Parent Programs • Social Agency Networks
Focus B Structure and Design of Curriculum	• Reduce class size • Heterogeneous Groups • Rich Curriculum — high standards (deeper not over-packed) • Power Ideas — themes that integrate with experience • Aligned curricula — goals, evaluation strategies, and curriculum needs to be aligned
Focus C Relationships Connectedness Coherence	• School size • School within a school • Instructional coherence (align outcome strategies and assessment) • Staff coherence (i.e., teacher teams) • Sense of Community (students need to feel "plugged in")
Focus D Equity, Access, and Resource Distribution	• Culturally sensitive curriculum and resources • Culturally responsive teaching • Anti-racist education • Supportive, well-managed transitions between schools (at-risk students find transitions very stressful)
Focus E Adaptive, Responsive Curriculum and Service Patterns	• All teachers need specialized training in Special Education, ESL, diagnostic assessments (skills of accommodation given high priority) • Principals need to adapt program delivery to unique data profiles of schools and achievement patterns • Promotion to positions of responsibility should require evidence of adapting curriculum or service to raise student success (an action research component) • New curricula must be designed that reflect a valuing of the workplace destination pathway combined with experiential learning • Curriculum must be engaging and relevant

Source: Ken Leithwood, "Successful Leadership for Especially Challenging Schools", OISE.

Appendix 4.1

B. Critical Success Factors Linked to Focus Areas

	Focus "A"	Focus "B"	Focus "C"	Focus "D"	Focus "E"
Success Factor 1					
Success Factor 2					
Success Factor 3					
Success Factor 4					
Success Factor 5					
Success Factor 6					
Success Factor 7					
Success Factor 8					
Success Factor 9					
Success Factor 10					
Success Factor 11					
Success Factor 12					
Success Factor 13					
Success Factor 14					
Success Factor 15					

Building and Maintaining Connections

Rationale

The purpose of building and maintaining connections is to create capacity and ownership in our community and our schools to support the development and implementation of credible and viable program pathways for students at risk.

Studies have shown that a significant proportion of secondary students move directly from secondary school to the workplace. Secondary schools must connect with area business/industry employers, local training and adjustment boards, and associations to develop and market pathway opportunities.

The following strategies will support Board Leaders in their efforts to involve education partners and stakeholders.

Steering Committees

Two steps that will help to ensure successful implementation of program pathways initiatives with the active participation of the stakeholders involved are the formation of two steering committees, one at the board level, the other at the school level. The suggested composition and focus of these steering committees are outlined in Appendix 5.1, at the end of this section.

Board Leaders' Network

It is imperative that Board Leaders develop strong connections with each other. An example of a process to facilitate the establishment of a network for Board Leaders is shown below. This format allows Board Leaders to meet on a regular basis to share concerns, resources, and successes and to support each other in their challenging positions.

The Kempenfelt Conference

The Kempenfelt Secondary School Reform Consultant Conference was established to support consultants with the implementation of Ontario secondary schools policy. The Kempenfelt experience is an excellent model for Board Leaders to consider for building a network of support to discuss issues and share ideas, experiences, and resources with other Board Leaders. The model has served secondary school reform consultants well over the past four years and has helped to promote more consistency with the implementation of secondary school reform initiatives.

The format of the conference provides opportunities for the sharing of resources and successful practices as well as opportunities to problem-solve current issues. This format has provided tremendous support to each participant attending the conference. Since the conference is held in a retreat setting, ideas can be shared in a relaxed, informal manner among smaller groups at meal times and unstructured times throughout the two days.

The social aspect of Kempenfelt plays a significant part in developing collegiality among participants and strengthens the commitment of participants to support each other with the implementation challenges of secondary school reform. The Kempenfelt conference model has helped the participants establish themselves as a professional learning community.

Format of the Conference

- The Kempenfelt conference is offered once in the spring and fall, usually in the months of April and October, and is informal in nature.
- One board takes the lead to organize the registration process.
- Two participants take the lead to facilitate establishing the focus workshops based on the "burning issues" of the large group. Once the top five or six priority issues are determined by the participants, each of these issues becomes a focus workshop. Participants choose three focus workshops in which to share their experiences. The focus workshop requires one person to volunteer to chair the focus workshop to keep the discussion moving ahead and one person to record the main points of discussion regarding the issue, which are shared with the whole group at the end of the day.
- It has been noted that the conference works best for a maximum of 50 participants. This enables more participants to contribute to the discussion and sharing of ideas. Participants are requested to bring at least one resource developed by their board to share with the entire group with the understanding that the resource can be duplicated by any board participating in the conference. All shared materials are collated and distributed to participants. Each participant describes briefly the content of the resource he or she is sharing.

Secondary School–College Links

Secondary schools must connect with their local college(s) in order to familiarize their staff with career opportunities, job-entry requirements, and postsecondary programs.

a) Board Leaders are encouraged to apply for funding initiatives that foster strong communication between secondary schools and colleges of applied arts and technology staff.

The following is an example of a generic structure that Board Leaders could implement in their board. The School/College/Work Initiative provided funding for this project. For additional information on the School/College/Work Initiative, see http://www.gotocollege.ca

Secondary School/College Strategic Pathways Planning Committee

Rationale

Significant gaps exist in the flow of college program information to secondary school classrooms. Secondary school teachers and students are not well informed about college program opportunities for students with and without an OSSD, and the related benefits of a college education. To address this challenge in the Sudbury area, educators from the four local school boards and Cambrian College have formed a Secondary School/College Strategic Planning Committee to address key issues and identify innovative ways to profile college programs as worthwhile options for secondary school students while at the same time addressing the drop-out prone secondary school student who is experiencing difficulty identifying a future program pathway. In addition, efforts to address opportunities for students without diplomas is an area of interest to committee members.

Mandate of the Committee

The committee will focus on strategic issues facing secondary schools and colleges with the common goal of collaborating to enhance opportunities for students at risk.

b) Students at risk could benefit from the Board Leader's knowledge and input into the programs available at colleges of applied arts and technology. To this end we recommend that secondary school personnel become members of college program advisory committees.

Sample Strategies to Enhance Employment Opportunities

There are many programs throughout the province that focus on those students who are not going to graduate from secondary school with an OSSD. The following are samples of strategies put in place by different boards to enhance the employment opportunities for students at risk.

a) The Learning Partnership in concert with the Toronto DSB, Toronto Catholic DSB, Durham DSB, and Durham Catholic DSB has formed a group with a team of business and community members. Their purpose is to develop co-op and work experience that would bridge from school to employment for a group of students with highly specialized learning needs and physical challenges.

b) Ontario Skills Passport and Initiative. Many boards offer their students at risk the opportunity to document their essential skills and workplace skills that are considered to be of greatest importance in the workplace. Participation in this initiative results in enhancements to the résumé and is most important for students who will not receive an OSSD.

c) Many colleges of applied arts and technology offer one-year programs such as Small Appliance Repair for students who have completed Grade 10. These programs are partial classroom and partial shop activities with a focus on human development and career exploration.

Provincial Leadership

It is recommended that CODE and Supervisory Officers Associations consider developing a provincial joint committee of their members with cross-sectoral leadership representation from industry, business, and health care associates to endorse, support, and profile pathways leading to the workplace or postsecondary education.

Focus and Composition of Board-level and School-level Steering Committees

Board-level Steering Committee

Board Leader for Students at Risk — Chair

Membership to include: elementary principals, secondary principals, consultants, supervisory officer, support staff, union representation, students, parents, graduates, business and industry representation, college representation. The steering committee could be a core group with a focus group to include broader representation.

Initial Focus

- ***Gap Analysis*** — what do we like, what could we change, what are we not doing at all.
- ***Needs Analysis*** — what should be occurring and who should be planning, implementing, doing it.
- ***Resource Analysis and Inventory*** — sources to be the policy documents, school and community programs and approaches; collect measurable data for ongoing evaluation.

Longer-Term Planning

- Develop a budget — resources, PD needs, etc.
- Develop an in-service plan.
- Develop and support learning teams.

School-level Steering Committee

Through consultation with the Board-level Steering Committee, the Board Leader will also work with principals to develop a local implementation plan for schools and partners, to include:

- Goals — with reference to students at risk
- Target group defined and specific needs identified
- Resources required and funds to be allocated for their purchase
- In-service plan — for committee members and for school staff
- Communication strategy — in school and outside of it
- Strategies and approaches, including timetable modifications, program options, transportation, resources

Recommended membership to be drawn from a secondary school and its feeder schools and to include secondary and elementary principals; department heads/teacher program leaders: Technological Education, Special Education/Literacy, Guidance/Cooperative Education, Academic staff; elementary staff; parents; students; business and industry partners.

Resources required to include release time for meeting and professional development.

Getting the Message Across: Creating and Implementing a Communication Plan

Rationale

Ensuring that the right message gets out to all stakeholders is essential in educating and changing the attitudes of the whole community towards understanding and valuing appropriate program pathways for all students. It is recommended that Board Leaders develop and implement a Communication Plan promoting successful school–work transition program pathways that is directed at stakeholders. A communication plan template is presented in Appendix 6.1, at the end of this section.

Essential Requirements

Some essential requirements of the Communication Plan are as follows:

- Consultation with and the participation of community stakeholders (including school councils, parents, teachers, students, school trustees, senior board staff).
- Distinct implementation and evaluation strategies.
- Inclusion of students in Grades 7 to 12 as part of its focus.
- Recognition of the potential of the Internet for online messaging and question/answer opportunities.

Board leaders are encouraged to seek the assistance of communication professionals. As well, Board Leaders within a region are encouraged to work with other school districts in order to maximize community impact and success.

Purpose and Goals

The purpose of the Communication Plan is to enhance the value of school–work transition program pathways as a viable choice by:

a) Raising the visibility and reputation of program pathways;

b) Generating positive media coverage;

c) Changing attitudes;

d) Generating public support;

e) Creating community partnerships.

Critical Elements

There are seven critical elements to a communication plan:

1. Understand the target audience and how to reach it.

❑ List stakeholders (internal and external):

i. Senior board staff
ii. Principals (elementary and secondary)
iii. Teachers (intermediate and senior level)
iv. School councils
v. Students, parents, community members
vi. Employers, business, industry

❑ What do they like to read or watch?

❑ Is there an existing model or protocol at the school board already determined?

❑ Is there an opportunity to partner with other local school boards?

2. Research past media coverage and public opinion about the Students at Risk Initiative and similar initiatives at the school board.

❑ Have there been any other types of initiatives recently released in the community?

❑ What is the general perception in the community in regard to students at risk?

3. Determine key messages (e.g., "Successful pathways for all").

❑ Create a phrase of 4 to 10 words to be included in every story.

❑ Produce 3 or 4 key message points.

❑ Develop a program pathways statement.

❑ Imagine the headline.

❑ Review, revise, and repeat.

❑ Present the message in the language of the receivers (i.e., French and/or English and other languages in the community).

4. Determine key materials to be produced (e.g., press release, brochure, etc.).

❑ One-page fact sheet

❑ PowerPoint presentations

❑ Press kit highlighting school board initiatives that complement the program

- ❑ Brochures for each audience member*
- ❑ Videos, CDs
- ❑ Newsletter and news stories
- ❑ Course calendars
- ❑ Sample "advertisement" to be inserted in community newspapers and other publications
- ❑ Linkages and promotion on school board and community partner websites

* *Information that could be used in a brochure for parents is presented in Appendix 6.2, at the end of this section.*

5. Determine availability of resources and funding required.

- ❑ How much staff time is needed?
- ❑ Is there a communications branch at the school board that can be utilized?
- ❑ Are there media partners in the community that can help to champion the program?
- ❑ Access in-house services and training (i.e., school councils, teachers, principals).

6. Develop a written work plan.

- ❑ Create timelines, calendar of events, and priorities.
- ❑ Develop strategy — expectations and deliverables.
- ❑ Assign tasks to volunteers/committee members.
- ❑ Review progress, enforce or revise deadlines.
- ❑ Reassign tasks as needed.
- ❑ Communicate what other people need to know before they need to know it. Provide time for people to move past an emotional reaction and on to effective involvement.

7. Implement the Communications Plan and evaluate and monitor results.

- ❑ Launch the program at a venue and time suitable for the community/school board.
- ❑ Keep a scrapbook of coverage and achievements.
- ❑ Create a "monthly bulletin" in order to bring the committee and stakeholders up to date on achievements and whereabouts of the campaign.
- ❑ Provide regular, unbiased reporting of project progress.
- ❑ Hold project-wide meetings at important milestones.

It is important to keep track of what worked and what didn't work. Evaluations can take many different forms, depending on the activities planned to promote the program, and may include one-on-one interviews, written surveys, and reactions from the target audience.

Appendix 6.1

Communication Plan Template

Keep this plan close at hand to make sure necessary communication events do not "slip through the cracks".

Issue/Event	Audience	Message / Content	Desired Outcome	Sender	Medium	Timing and Frequency	Evaluation
	What is the target audience that will receive the communication?	What do you wish to communicate?	What is the result you hope to achieve?	Who will deliver the message?	How will the communication be delivered?	When will the message be delivered? How often will it be sent?	How well was the information received?

Information for Parents About Program Pathways

1. What is a program pathway?

A program pathway consists of the combination of courses that make up a student's educational program and the supports provided in offering that program. A program pathway is designed to lead a student to a particular destination, and should reflect the goals that motivate students to complete their secondary education. A program pathway is considered successful if the student makes a smooth transition to the next stage of his or her life, be that the workplace, apprenticeship, or university/college.

2. What are the options available in selecting a program pathway?

Broadly speaking, students may select a program pathway that prepares them for a university or college program, for an apprenticeship program, or for immediate entry into the work force. Within each program pathway, students may take a combination of Academic, Applied, Locally Developed Compulsory Credit, and Open courses in Grades 9 and 10, and of University, College, and Workplace Preparation, Open, and Locally Developed Optional Credit courses in Grades 11 and 12.

3. Why would a student select a school–work transition program pathway?

Currently, most students opt for a program pathway that prepares them for university or college. Many of these students, however, do not go to university or college on leaving school, and are enrolled in University or College Preparation courses that are not suitable for them. Such students would benefit from selecting a program pathway that plays to their strengths and draws out the full range of their capabilities.

A school–work transition program pathway will prepare students for employment immediately on leaving secondary school. It provides students with the opportunity to complete secondary school diploma or certificate requirements, meet the entry-level requirements of a specific industry, develop employability and industry-specific skills, and obtain experience in the workplace.

4. How do University Preparation, College Preparation, and Workplace Preparation courses differ from one another?

The strands and expectations are similar. The differences emerge in the varying focus on theory and practice, analysis and application, and future orientation to theoretical study or practical application. All three programs present rigorous challenges that provide appropriate preparation for the student's destination.

5. Are Workplace Preparation courses less challenging than University and College Preparation courses?

Workplace Preparation courses are challenging, but in a different way from University and College Preparation courses. They emphasize hands-on experience and skills application rather than theoretical learning. Skills application, however, requires a thorough understanding of the discipline areas concerned. Some students who plan to go to university or college choose to take Workplace Preparation courses because they offer excellent opportunities to acquire and develop knowledge and skills in particular areas.

6. How do Locally Developed Compulsory Credit Courses compare with other courses?

Locally Developed Compulsory Credit Courses are fully recognized compulsory credit courses in the Ontario Secondary School curriculum. They are not substitutions. These are courses developed locally that meet Ministry of Education criteria and have ministry approval as compulsory credit courses.

7. How many Locally Developed Compulsory Credit Courses can a student take?

A student may take three Locally Developed Compulsory Courses as regular compulsory credit courses in Grade 9 or 10 in English, mathematics, and science.

8. How do students select a program pathway that is right for them?

Students should be encouraged to balance personal dreams with realistic assessment of skills, interests, and values in choosing future programs. This requires a measure of self-knowledge. This process should begin early and should be continuously re-evaluated as students grow, mature, and change. Programs must be structured to provide the flexibility necessary to accommodate and support these changes. Students need program pathways that are clearly aligned with their strengths and learning styles. They must see their courses and programs as viable and credible, enabling them to achieve educational goals that fit well with their life goals.

9. At what grade level should a program pathway be selected?

A program pathway is not a permanent commitment but may be revised or redirected as skill levels and interests change. Preparing for the transition from school to the next stage of life begins before students enter secondary school. Students in Grades 7 and 8 need to learn how to make informed, responsible, and appropriate choices that will help them progress successfully through secondary school and beyond. Schools endeavour to provide program flexibility for pathway transitions to occur in a timely fashion.

10. How wide a range of courses is available to students selecting a school–work transition program pathway?

School–work transition program pathways offer both in-school and work-based experiences. Over the course of two to four years, students earn relevant in-school credits that enable them to develop the range of skills (literacy, numeracy, life, and employability) required for direct entry into the work force. The courses that form a student's program pathway are drawn from all disciplines and may include Applied, Academic, Open, Locally Developed Compulsory and Locally Developed Optional, and Workplace Preparation courses, as well as University or College Preparation courses. School–work transition program pathways also contain a vigorous experiential learning component, including guest speakers, industry tours, job shadowing, job twinning, short-term work experience, virtual work experience, cooperative education, and school–work transition programs, and may include the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP).

11. Does selecting a school–work transition program pathway and using substitutes for compulsory courses affect the standing of the Ontario Secondary School Diploma a student receives?

The ability of the principal, in consultation with parents and students, to use substitutions for compulsory credits is recognized in *Ontario Secondary Schools, Grades 9 to 12: Program and Diploma Requirements, 1999*. While each substitution is noted on the student's Ontario Student Transcript, it does not have any impact on the diploma that the student will ultimately receive.

12. Once a program pathway has been chosen, can it be changed?

A program pathway is designed to lead a student to a particular destination. This does not mean, however, that the student will always end up at that destination. Goals can change, and students should be free to make new choices as they develop new interests and abilities. Program pathways must have built-in flexibility so that these choices can be made without disrupting students' progress. The choice of a program pathway is not therefore an irreversible decision. For specific information about your son's or daughter's options, please contact your local school.

13. Will selecting a school–work transition program pathway prevent my son/daughter from receiving any postsecondary education?

Entering the work force does not put an end to opportunities for further formal education. Many people go to postsecondary education as mature students, having gained experience in their chosen fields after secondary school. For specific information about your son's or daughter's program and postsecondary options, please contact your local school.

14. Can students who follow a school–work transition program pathway look forward to fulfilling and successful careers?

Yes, they can. There are many opportunities for fulfilling and successful careers in every sector of the economy that do not require college or university education.

15. Where can I go for further information or assistance in making decisions about the program for my son or daughter?

You should contact your local school or board for more information.

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